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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	11/16 Disasters hit 90% counties in last decade
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/science-united-states-emergency-management-climate-and-environment-4663b776dd05fb4114276b31e503b77c
GIST	Ninety percent of the counties in the United States suffered a weather disaster between 2011 and 2021, according to a report published Wednesday.

Some endured as many as 12 federally-declared disasters over those 11 years. More than 300 million people — 93% of the country’s population — live in these counties.

Rebuild by Design, which published the report, is a nonprofit that researches ways to prepare for and adapt to climate change. It was started by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, the catastrophic storm that slammed into the eastern U.S. just over ten years ago, causing \$62.5 billion in damage.

Researchers had access to data from contractors who work closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, allowing them to analyze disasters and payouts down to the county level. The report includes some 250 maps. They also looked at who is most vulnerable, and compared how long people in different places are left without power after extreme weather.

California, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Iowa and Tennessee had the most disasters, at least 20 each, including severe storms, wildfire, flooding, and landslides. But entirely different states — Louisiana, New York, New Jersey, North Dakota and Vermont — received the most disaster funding per person over the 11-year period.

Amy Chester, managing director of Rebuild by Design and co-author of the report, said she was surprised to see some states are getting more money to rebuild than others. Partly it’s that cost of living differs among states. So does the monetary value of what gets damaged or destroyed.

“Disaster funding is oftentimes skewed toward communities that are more affluent and have the most resources,” said Robert Bullard, an environmental and climate justice professor at Texas Southern University, who was not part of the team that wrote the report. Bullard wrote a book, “The Wrong Complexion for Protection” in 2012 with another environmental and climate justice expert, Beverly Wright, about how federal responses to disasters often exclude black communities.

The new report seems to support that. People who are most vulnerable to the effects of these extreme weather events are not receiving much of the money, the report said. Those areas of the country also endure the longest electric outages.

“When disasters hit funding doesn’t get to the places of greatest need,” Bullard said.

Another reason for the unevenness of funds could be that heat waves are excluded from federal disaster law and don’t trigger government aid. If they did, states in the southwest like Arizona and Nevada might rank higher on spending per person.

REPORT OVERSTEPS

The report was prepared by policy advocates, not scientists, and oversteps in attributing every weather disaster to climate change. That is inaccurate. Climate change has turbocharged the climate and made some hurricanes stronger and disaster more frequent, said Rob Jackson, a climate scientist at Stanford University. But, “I don’t think it’s appropriate to call every every disaster we’ve experienced in the last 40 years a climate disaster.”

Even though all the weather disasters compiled aren’t attributable to climate change, Jackson said the collection could still have value.

“I do think there is a service to highlighting that weather disasters affect essentially all Americans now, no matter where we live.”

The annual costs of disasters has skyrocketed, he said, to over \$100 billion in 2020. The National Centers for Environmental Information tallied more than \$150 billion for 2021.

	<p>POLICY CHANGE</p> <p>The federal government provided counties a total \$91 billion to recover after extreme events over the 11 years, the researchers found. That only includes spending from two programs run by FEMA and HUD, not individual assistance or insurance payouts from the agency. Nor does it include help from other agencies like the Small Business Administration or Army Corps of Engineers.</p> <p>Chester said that if all these federal disaster relief programs were included, the total would be far higher. The National Centers for Environmental Information estimate over \$1 trillion was spent on weather and climate events between 2011 and 2021.</p> <p>The report recommends the federal government shift to preventing disasters rather than waiting for events to happen. It cites the National Institute of Building Sciences which says that every dollar invested in mitigating natural disaster by building levees or doing prescribed burns saves the country \$6.</p> <p>“The key takeaway for us is that our government continues to invest in places that have already suffered instead of investing in the areas with the highest social and physical vulnerability,” Chester said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 NATO faces Russia supremacy in the Arctic
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/nato-allies-wake-russian-supremacy-113953199.html
GIST	<p>(Reuters) - The world's largest satellite ground station, on the Svalbard archipelago off Norway, is used by Western space agencies to gather vital signals from polar-orbiting satellites. This January, one of two fibre-optic cables on the Arctic seabed connecting Svalbard to the mainland was severed. Norway was forced to rely on a back-up link.</p> <p>In April 2021, another cable – one used by a Norwegian research laboratory to monitor activity on the Arctic seafloor – was ripped away.</p> <p>"This could have happened by accident," Norway's defence chief Eirik Kristoffersen told Reuters in response to the ruptures, which received little media coverage outside Norway. "But the Russians are capable of cutting cables."</p> <p>He was speaking generally and did not offer any evidence to suggest deliberate damage, but months later, in September, saboteurs caused major leaks to suddenly erupt in gas pipelines from Russia to Europe on the floor of the Baltic Sea. Russia's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>As Russia's invasion of Ukraine ends a post-Cold War era of low tension and cooperation, such events highlight how hard it is for states to monitor their own waters – particularly in the Arctic, an ocean one and a half times the size of the United States, where satellites are crucial to allow real-time detection and monitoring of activity.</p> <p>Over recent years, NATO allies and Russia have scaled up military exercises in the region; Chinese and Russian warships conducted a joint exercise in the Bering Sea in September. Norway raised its military alert level in October.</p> <p>But the West trails Russia in military presence.</p> <p>Since 2005, Russia has reopened tens of Arctic Soviet-era military bases, modernised its navy, and developed new hypersonic missiles designed to evade U.S. sensors and defences.</p> <p>Four Arctic experts say it would take the West at least 10 years to catch up with Russia's military in the region, if it chose to do so.</p>

"The Arctic is currently a dark area on the map," said Ketil Olsen, formerly Norway's military representative in NATO and the European Union, who heads Andoeya Space, a Norwegian state-controlled company that tests new military and surveillance technologies and launches research rockets.

"It's so vast and with few civilian surveillance resources."

The chief of the U.S. Northern Command, General Glen VanHerck, told a Senate hearing in March the United States needed better Arctic "domain awareness" to detect and address Russian and Chinese capabilities to launch advanced missiles and destroy communications infrastructure. In a Pentagon strategy document released in October, the United States committed to improving early warning and surveillance systems in the Arctic, but the pace of the planned modernisation is unclear.

At the same time, fast-rising temperatures are creating problems for some U.S. military infrastructure built on permafrost foundations, which are melting. Coastal erosion could also impact U.S. radar sites, the Pentagon says.

There are few risks in the near term, U.S. officials and military analysts say: The West is far stronger than Russia in conventional forces and Russia's limited success in Ukraine exposed weaknesses many in the West had not expected.

Russia's military efforts are currently mostly focused on Ukraine, leaving "very limited strength of personnel on the army side" in the Arctic Kola Peninsula, which is home to its Northern Fleet navy and nuclear submarines, according to Kristoffersen.

U.S. missile defences are designed to defend against a limited attack from a rogue state, and the United States has expressed confidence in its ability to deter a nuclear attack by Russia or China. But insufficient visibility in the Arctic could limit U.S. response time in a crisis, a situation VanHerck and other officials want to avoid.

"What you can't see and what you can't determine, you can't defend from," VanHerck told the Senate.

Police investigating the Norwegian cable ruptures interviewed the crew of Russian fishing trawlers that had been nearby, but dropped the investigations without charge for lack of evidence of what happened; the government said it brought forward a planned upgrade of the back-up line.

If a sabotage attack were to happen in Norway, it would likely be difficult to hold anyone accountable for it, Hedvig Moe, deputy head of Norway's PST police security service, told Reuters. "We call it a deniable attack in our world," she said.

"NATO is increasing its presence in the Arctic with more modern capabilities," NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg told Reuters. "This is of course a response to what Russia is doing. They have significantly increased their presence ... and therefore we also need greater presence."

TENSIONS

As a shrinking ice cap opens up new sea lanes and resources, the Arctic is becoming strategically more important. Parts are accessible in a few months in summers as the sea ice melts, unlocking opportunities.

For Russia, vast oil and gas resources lie in its Arctic regions, including a liquefied natural gas plant on the Yamal Peninsula.

The waters between Greenland, Iceland and the UK - known as the GIUK Gap - are the only way Russia's northern-based ships can reach the Atlantic. The shortest path by air to North America for Russian missiles or bombers would be over the North Pole.

For the NATO allies, the GIUK Gap is crucial for links across the North Atlantic. There are oil and gas fields too: Norway is now Europe's largest gas supplier.

If Sweden and Finland join the Alliance, seven out of eight Arctic countries will be members.

Also at risk today are communications cables and satellite systems including the global positioning system (GPS) linking both civilian and military users, Andrew Lewis, former commander of NATO's Joint Task Force in Norfolk, Virginia, told Reuters.

In July, President Vladimir Putin launched a new naval strategy pledging to protect Arctic waters "by all means."

Russia usually tests its nuclear deterrent in the Arctic in the autumn. This year, that happened on Feb. 19, five days before its Ukraine invasion.

"This was of course a signal," said Norway's defence chief Kristoffersen.

Diplomacy in the region was thrown into disarray in March when seven members of the Arctic Council, a forum for international cooperation, said they would boycott talks in Russia, which currently holds the body's chairmanship.

An incident on Oct. 15 underlined the sharpening tone. In a speech at an Arctic forum in Iceland, the chairman of NATO's military committee, Rob Bauer, criticised China for not condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. China calls itself a near-Arctic state and Beijing's envoy to Reykjavik, He Rulong, was in the audience.

He stood up and said Bauer's speech was "full of arrogance" and "paranoid," accusing him of heightening tensions. NATO and the Chinese embassy in Iceland declined to comment on the exchange.

RUSSIA'S DOMINANCE

"At the moment, the military balance in the Arctic is heavily weighted towards Russia," said Colin Wall, research associate at Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Russia's bases inside the Arctic Circle outnumber NATO's by about a third, according to data compiled by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and Reuters.

Russia now has 11 submarines capable of launching long-range nuclear weapons for use in an all-out nuclear war, eight of them based in the Arctic Kola Peninsula, according to the IISS. NATO has 22 between the United States, France and the UK.

In July, Russia's navy took delivery of a new submarine, Belgorod, which can carry the Poseidon torpedo, a new, nuclear-armed stealth torpedo designed to sneak past coastal defences by travelling along the seafloor. Russian state media have said Poseidon could cause a giant tsunami that would turn the coastline into a "radioactive desert."

Moscow also has over the last two years tested a hypersonic glide missile, Zircon, which Putin said in 2019 can reach nine times the speed of sound, making it the world's fastest. In February, it said the missile was launched in the Arctic waters between mainland Norway and Svalbard.

"We are starting serial production of Zircon missiles, and we have actually put it into service," Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu was quoted as saying by military news outlet Zvezda on Aug. 20. Russia's defence ministry did not respond to a request for more details.

Russia's icebreaker fleet vastly outnumbers those of other nations, according to the IISS. Official data shows it has seven nuclear-powered icebreakers and around 30 diesel-powered ones. The United States and China each have two diesel-powered icebreakers in operation.

NATO INVESTS

For decades, Arctic NATO allies stuck to a belief that conflicts with Russia would not spill over into their region: With overall defence budgets capped, investments in military hardware and surveillance and communication capabilities were often considered too expensive.

Now NATO and Arctic allies are changing their stance.

Since Russia launched its "special operation" in Ukraine, Canada has pledged to boost military spending by some C\$13 billion (\$10 billion) including an upgrade of an early warning radar system with the United States, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, and new surveillance planes capable of detecting submarines.

The first planes will be delivered in 2032. Given the challenges of the harsh environment, it will take decades to be ready, Canada's Chief of Defense Staff General Wayne Eyre told a parliamentary committee in October.

Eyre says one reason NORAD's research and development component needs modernising is to track hypersonic missiles better.

"That is of great concern – the ability to detect hypersonics coming from any country – and we've seen some technological advances from some of the competitors out there," Eyre told reporters in November.

He said it was difficult to judge the effectiveness of Russia's hypersonic missiles based on those used in Ukraine, because the distances in Ukraine were far shorter than any that could be used to target North America.

Since 2020 a joint force command in Norfolk, Virginia in the United States has been monitoring the Atlantic, but the Atlantic Council, a U.S. think tank, says there are not enough satellites above the North Pole to give a complete picture. General VanHerck said in May that the military is testing some of the hundreds of polar-orbiting satellites launched in recent years by commercial providers SpaceX, owned by Elon Musk, and Britain's OneWeb.

The U.S. military says it is planning "major investment upgrades" at a U.S. base at Thule, Greenland to fix ageing infrastructure. A U.S. delegation travelled to Greenland in May to explore radar locations, a diplomatic source told Reuters.

Sweden and Finland have begun investing in surveillance and deterrence capabilities and military hardware including jets so their air forces can fight alongside Arctic NATO allies. Denmark has set aside some \$200 million to improve its Arctic military capabilities, including satellites and surveillance drones capable of flying up to 40 hours, and is reopening a Cold War era radar on the Faroe Islands between the UK and Iceland.

Norway, whose maritime areas spread across 2 million sq km (770,000 square miles), has four satellites to help monitor the Arctic. It is launching four more, two in 2023 and two in 2024. It is also investing \$35 million in Andoeya Space to set up a spaceport. Sweden and Canada are also planning Arctic spaceports.

Andoeya Space is a partner in an Arctic surveillance and sensing project led by U.S. aerospace company Boeing Co. Based on satellites, unmanned aircraft, drones, ships and unmanned submarines developed for the Arctic environment, the project - under development since 2018 - says it is ready to offer NATO allies real-time updates in the north, including surveillance of enemy vessels, aeroplanes and submarines.

	<p>The U.S. Department of Defense is installing a long-range radar system allowing satellites and other ground-based radars to work together in Alaska that it says will "be able to address hypersonic missiles in future configurations." It is due for completion in 2023, but the Missile Defense Agency declined to comment on whether it would be able to intercept the Zircon.</p> <p>More answers may come in a stand-alone Arctic strategy document the Pentagon is expected to publish next March, a U.S. military official said, in what would be the first update since 2019. It would come as the Pentagon tries to better define what capabilities are needed for American warfighters at dangerously low temperatures.</p> <p>"When it's dark all the time in the winter and it's 50- to 60-below-zero or even more, it is just brutal," the official told Reuters.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Household debt soars fastest pace 15yrs
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2022/11/15/household-debt-soars-at-fastest-pace-in-15-years-as-credit-card-use-surges-fed-report-says.html
GIST	<p>Households increased debt during the third quarter at the fastest pace in 15 years due to hefty increases in credit card usage and mortgage balances, the Federal Reserve reported Tuesday.</p> <p>Total debt jumped by \$351 billion for the July-to-September period, the largest nominal quarterly increase since 2007, bringing the collective household IOU in the U.S. to a fresh record \$16.5 trillion. That's an increase of 2.2% from the previous quarter and 8.3% from a year ago.</p> <p>The increase follows a \$310 billion jump in the second quarter and represents a \$1.27 trillion annual increase.</p> <p>Debt has surged over the past year due to inflation running near its highest pace in more than 40 years and amid rising interest rates and strong consumer demand.</p> <p>The biggest contributors to that debt load came from mortgage balances, which rose \$1 trillion from a year ago to \$11.7 trillion, and credit card debt, which climbed to \$930 billion.</p> <p>The credit card balance collectively rose more than 15% from the same period in 2021, the largest annual jump in more than 20 years, according to the New York Fed, which released the report. The increase "towers over the last eighteen years of data," a group of Fed researchers said in a blog post on the central bank site.</p> <p>"Credit card, mortgage, and auto loan balances continued to increase in the third quarter of 2022 reflecting a combination of robust consumer demand and higher prices," said Donghoon Lee, economic research advisor at the New York Fed. "However, new mortgage originations have slowed to pre-pandemic levels amid rising interest rates."</p> <p>New York Fed researchers attributed the credit card growth to "very robust" consumption, rising prices and consumers using substantial levels of savings that remain on accounts.</p> <p>Along with the rise in balances has come an increase in delinquencies.</p> <p>However, while "delinquency rates are rising, they remain low by historical standards and suggest consumers are managing their finances through the period of increasing prices," the researchers wrote.</p> <p>Elsewhere in the report, the Fed said auto loan balances edged higher to \$1.52 trillion while student loan debt nudged lower to \$1.57 trillion. Student loan debt is the lowest since the second quarter of 2021 amid an extended period of forbearance and the Biden administration's efforts to forgive some education loan debt.</p>

	<p>Auto loan debt, while posting only a slight increase on a quarterly basis, is up 5.6% from a year ago.</p> <p>Mortgage balances continued to grind higher amid a sharp increase in interest rates that has seen 30-year mortgages loan rates hover around 7%. Total debt climbed even though originations fell sharply, dropping nearly 17% to \$633 billion.</p> <p>Foreclosures remained low even as a pandemic-related moratorium expired. Student loan delinquent rates remained around 4%.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 NATO: missile strike not deliberate
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/16/nato-says-poland-missile-strike-was-not-deliberate-or-ukraines-fault.html
GIST	<p>NATO said there was no indication that the missile strike that hit a Polish border village on Tuesday night was deliberate, saying that Russia was ultimately to blame as it continues to bombard Ukraine with missiles.</p> <p>The military alliance's secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, said the missile incident took place "as Russia launched a massive wave of rocket attacks across Ukraine."</p> <p>While the investigation was ongoing into the incident, he said, "there was no indication this was the result of a deliberate attack" and no indication it was a result of "offensive military actions against NATO."</p> <p>Preliminary analysis, as previously reported, suggests the incident was caused by a Ukrainian air defense missile fired to intercept a Russian missile.</p> <p>"Let me be clear, this is not Ukraine's fault. Russia bears the ultimate responsibility as it continues its war against Ukraine," he said.</p> <p>The comments come after the alliance's North Atlantic Council held an emergency meeting following the missile strike that hit Poland on Tuesday night, killing two civilians.</p> <p>Early Wednesday morning, The Associated Press reported, citing three unnamed U.S. officials, that preliminary assessments indicated "the missile that struck Poland had been fired by Ukrainian forces at an incoming Russian missile."</p> <p>Other media agencies, including NBC News, cited similar details on Wednesday; Reuters reported a NATO source as saying President Joe Biden had told the G-7 and NATO partners that the strike was caused by "a Ukrainian air defense missile," while The Wall Street Journal cited two senior Western officials briefed on the preliminary U.S. assessments as saying the missile was from a Ukrainian air defense system.</p> <p>Those assessments came after Biden said Tuesday that it was "unlikely" the missile was fired from Russia, citing the trajectory of the rocket. President Andrzej Duda of Poland said Wednesday that there was no indication that this was an intentional attack on Poland.</p> <p>"There are many indications that it was an air defense missile, which unfortunately fell on Polish territory," Duda said.</p> <p>Ukraine's defense ministry responded cautiously to reports suggesting its own armed forces fired the missile that hit Poland, saying it wanted to see the evidence that NATO's assessment was based upon.</p> <p>Yuriy Sak, an advisor to Ukraine's Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov, told CNBC earlier on Wednesday that Kyiv welcomed a thorough investigation of the incident, but said the issue was "very sensitive."</p>

	<p>“It is too early to give any definitive answers and it’s very dangerous to jump to any conclusions,” Sak said before NATO’s press briefing.</p> <p>“Before any conclusions are made, an investigation must be done. So, that is where we stand,” he said.</p> <p>After NATO’s comments, Oleksii Danilov, the head of Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council, tweeted that Kyiv favored a “joint study” into the incident, and wanted to see the evidence held by its allies that suggested it was involved.</p> <p>Danilov said on Twitter that Ukraine was “ready to hand over the evidence of the Russian trail that we have” but Kyiv was still awaiting “information from our partners, on the basis of which a conclusion was made that it is a Ukrainian air defense missile.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Election-related violence never materialized
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/elections/articles/2022-11-15/election-related-violence-never-materializes
GIST	<p>Concerns over unruly election-related demonstrations and potential violence proved largely unfounded as the results of the midterms elections settled with little fanfare, even in states that have in the last several years been hotbeds of election-related conspiracies.</p> <p>Fears had mounted in the wake of 2020, when Donald Trump’s election fraud lies fueled large, volatile protests and counterprotests, and eventually culminated in the violent insurrection at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.</p> <p>Some Republican candidates, such as GOP candidate for Arizona governor Kari Lake, indicated that they would not accept the election results if they lost, escalating concerns especially in the last few months. Authorities reported intimidation at ballot boxes during early voting in Arizona, including by armed actors, prompting the intervention of a federal judge.</p> <p>But even as former President Donald Trump and others on the right promoted unfounded theories of election fraud in Arizona and other crucial swing states, protests remained scattered, modest and largely quiet as ballots were counted and results rolled in.</p> <p>In Arizona, for example, a crowd of 100 to 200 people gathered around the Maricopa County Tabulation and Election Center over the weekend after Democrat Mark Kelly was declared the winner of the state’s race for a crucial Senate seat. Protesters carried signs alleging fraud and other voter irregularities and at one point reenacted the biblical Battle of Jericho, but, aside from concerns from police about the obstruction of roads, officials said the gathering was calm and peaceful and dispersed without incident.</p> <p>The real test came Monday evening, when Democrat Katie Hobbs won the gubernatorial race against Trump-endorsed Lake, who is one of the most prominent election-deniers who ran this cycle. Still, as of Tuesday morning, there were no major reports of particularly large or violent protests.</p> <p>While there were, however, some isolated incidents in other states – in Wisconsin, for example, a man with a knife entered a polling place on Election Day but was arrested with no injuries reported – the results were met with relative calm across the country.</p> <p>One reason is that Trump-aligned candidates accepted election results when races were called rather than deny losses with claims of fraud or malfeasance. Prior to the election, several candidates had suggested they would not accept results, but even handpicked Trump candidates like Dan Cox in Maryland along with Doug Mastriano and Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania, conceded races in a timely manner after results were returned.</p> <p>“We’re seeing everybody being adults,” Kentucky Secretary of State Michael Adams, a Republican, told CNN.</p>

Another reason, officials have said, is that states and localities were better prepared for potential violence, establishing policing plans and being more vigilant. Election protection groups and voting civil rights advocates were also very active during voting and on Election Day in many states, addressing concerns and working with state and local offices to head off potential issues quickly.

“We were very clear that we wouldn’t at any point allow any disruptions or interference or intimidation, and I believe a lot of that preparedness helped deter potential disruptions today,” Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson said during a press conference on election night.

“I think a lot of what you saw in full today is a reflection of how we have become even stronger as a community and more prepared for any contingency as a result of what we’ve endured the past few years and certainly as a result of what we went through, not just in the 2020 election itself, but in the months that followed,” she said.

In some cases, officials and media personalities on the right encouraged people to stay away from voting tabulation centers, especially as Republican candidates trailed while ballots were still being counted.

And the election denialism that fueled so much of the unrest in 2020 was rejected by voters in many places, appearing to start to slide out of style, even among those on the right. Not a single candidate who denied Joe Biden’s victory in the 2020 presidential race was elected as state secretary of state in any swing state this cycle, and several prominent, Trump-endorsed gubernatorial candidates who had embraced denialism – including Lake in Arizona and Mastriano in Pennsylvania – lost their bids.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Did OPA break city, state records laws?
SOURCE	https://southseattleemerald.com/2022/11/15/opa-may-have-broken-city-and-state-records-laws-by-not-retaining-emails/
GIST	<p>The <i>Emerald</i> has discovered that officials within the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) may have broken — indeed may be continuing to break — public records laws by either manually deleting or allowing certain emails to expire before the two-year mark prescribed by City and State records laws. At least one of these emails concerned an item of public interest. State law makes the intentional destruction of these records a felony offense, if any law enforcement agency should choose to investigate.</p> <p>In response to a public records request, officials with the Seattle Police Department failed to find at least one email that should have been disclosed under State and City transparency laws. Those officials said they conducted a thorough search, including reaching out directly to OPA officials. The record in question regards a proposal for an assessment of the police accountability system that Seattle City Councilmember Lisa Herbold floated last October. (This is an issue the <i>Emerald</i> has been following and will detail further in a forthcoming article.)</p> <p>If these records do indeed still exist, but officials withheld them, that conduct could also expose officials to criminal liability under Washington State law.</p> <p>Whatever the case, as with the ongoing case regarding former Mayor Jenny Durkan’s text messages, officials can choose to investigate records destruction independent of other potential crimes.</p> <p>After reviewing the relevant documents and communications regarding the assessment of the police accountability system, Washington Coalition for Open Government (WashCOG) president emeritus and Kirkland City Councilmember Toby Nixon told the <i>Emerald</i> in an interview that he agrees that the OPA appears to have broken public records law by not retaining this information. He also confirmed that these records would appear to fall under item nine in the “Office Management” section of the City of Seattle’s records retention laws, which concerns both executive and nonexecutive</p>

communications. This section states that, for all departments, such records must be retained for two years after said “communication [is] received or provided.”

Additionally, Nixon said that this is also reflected in [Washington State records law](#).

According to SPD public records officers, a thorough search for the records in question returned no matching results. But on Oct. 27, 2021, former OPA Director of Public Affairs and Policy Anne Bettsworth sent an email to a legislative aide regarding Herbold’s proposed assessment. The *Emerald* has obtained the email in question — which came from a different public disclosure request to a different City department — and will return to it in a forthcoming article.

When shown the email, SPD’s public records department sent the following message: “Please be advised that our email retention schedule is for 90 days, so when your request was submitted many, if not all, of the potential emails related to this request were purged.” The message from SPD’s records department continues with, “Additionally, I reached out directly to OPA who did not have any records specific to this request. I have also confirmed with budget [the City Budget Office] this was not an SPD action item, and they have no records. If you really want, I can reproduce the email you provided and invoice you for that.”

The *Emerald* reached out to the OPA to ask about the agency’s records retention practices on Oct. 13, 2022. In an Oct. 17 reply, interim Assistant Director of Operations & Training Katelyn Wielickiewicz told the *Emerald* that “[t]he 90-day email retention policy is determined by the SPD retention policies,” and that “[a]s such, OPA also follows the 90-day email policy.”

However, when the *Emerald* attempted to clarify, Wielickiewicz gave what appeared to be a contradictory reply.

The *Emerald*: “When did that start, and what is the reasoning behind the 90-day retention schedule? The manual says [OPA is to follow] City and SPD policy re: record retention, and I am curious as to why OPA opted to follow SPD’s.”

Wielickiewicz: “OPA does follow the 90 day city policy. Please also see the attached documents provided by City Records (including the General Records Retention Schedule), and their answer below.”

The answer, which Wielickiewicz appears to have forwarded from the City’s records retention team, states, “Retention is not 90 days. This is auto-deletion setting. An employee has 90 days to determine if the message is a record or transitory. This email setting is set across all City departments.”

Wielickiewicz also wrote in an email on Oct. 18 that “[i]n addition to City policy and trainings, OPA follows the Records Manager’s recommendations, which are reflected in [OPA’s Internal Operations and Training Manual](#), Section 3.5(D)(iii) (included below).”

These state:

iii. Email

OPA staff must follow the City and SPD’s guidance on email retention. As a general framework, the City’s Records Manager recommends the following:

- (7 yr) *Programs/Projects: Use for day-to-day administration of programs or special projects that do not involve investigations.*
- (10 yr) *Investigations: Use for investigations-related emails and records. The general retention for these types of records is six years after completion, but since investigations may last longer than one year, the seven-year does not adequately ensure the retention will be met.*
- (20 yr) *Executive Management: Only used by OPA Director for high-level policy and program administration. Records created at that level are often historically valuable, meaning that once the Director has left the City, they need to be transferred for preservation in the Seattle Municipal Archives.*

Wieliczkiewicz did not indicate when the OPA began operating on a 90-day retention schedule — and thus did not answer the *Emerald*'s initial question — and also repeatedly directed the *Emerald* to refer any further records retention questions to the City's records retention team.

According to Wieliczkiewicz herself, OPA employees are trained on City policy, which includes records retention. The *Emerald* also confirmed with a City communications employee, who preferred to remain anonymous, that City employees are trained to regularly retain records to avoid violating public records laws.

Much like the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR) or the Seattle Office of Labor Standards (SOLS), despite investigating claims of misconduct, the OPA does not appear to be a law enforcement agency, according to the State's [statutory definitions of law enforcement](#). Unlike SOCR and SOLS, the OPA does not enforce anything. Any disciplinary measures the OPA suggests are just that — suggestions — that the chief of police ultimately decides to enforce ([or not](#)). As such, it would not seem as though the OPA should be operating under Washington State's records retention laws for [law enforcement](#), which state that “non-emergency” communications only have to be retained for 90 days.

But defining the agency's status appears to be something of a legal hot potato.

The *Emerald* asked the Seattle City Attorney's Office (SCAO) whether the OPA is a law enforcement agency, but the SCAO declined to comment, stating that “your question likely constitutes a legal opinion. As such, we are not able to comment at this time.”

The *Emerald* also asked SPD, the OPA, and the mayor's office this same question. SPD responded that the OPA “doesn't conduct criminal investigations, but you may want to put the question to OPA itself to see how they would define their role.”

Neither the OPA nor the Office of the Mayor responded to the *Emerald*.

Therefore, according to the records retention policies Wieliczkiewicz provided, Bettsworth specifically, or officials after Bettsworth's tenure, appear to have broken records retention laws by deleting — or allowing automatic deletion of — emails pertaining to ongoing investigations and issues of interest to the public. It is immediately unclear how many other records that should have been retained per records retention laws have also been manually or automatically deleted within the agency.

“The ability to delete a record is not dependent at all on the physical form of the record. It depends 100% on the content,” WashCOG's Nixon said of the State's records laws. However, he said, this particular situation is “challenging, because the public records act does not itself contain a cause of action for records that were deleted before they were requested.”

The legal phrase “[cause of action](#)” refers to factual elements that enable [legal remedy](#), a form of court enforcement of legal right.

“For records that were illegally deleted under the retention schedule in [RCW 40.14](#) — you make a request, and they say, ‘We can't deliver that record, because it doesn't exist,’ that's actually a crime under [RCW 40.16](#),” Nixon explained. “And, so, to pursue it, you have to file a criminal complaint and convince a prosecuting attorney to file charges. And that's very difficult to convince them to do that.”

In a later email, Nixon pointed to the state laws [RCW 40.16.010](#) and [RCW 40.16.020](#). The former states that anyone who “willfully” destroys, removes, alters, or conceals any public record “is guilty of a class C felony and shall be punished by imprisonment in a state correctional facility for not more than five years, or by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars, or by both.”

The latter specifically regards public officials who destroy or tamper with records specific to their office and states that such officials are “guilty of a class B felony and shall be punished by

imprisonment in a state correctional facility for not more than ten years, or by a fine of not more than five thousand dollars, or by both.”

That said, Nixon explained to the *Emerald*, successful criminal prosecution for illegally deleting public records “has happened,” and “there have been a number of public records destruction cases around the state, but usually, they are in conjunction with other charges, like because somebody was trying to cover up corruption.” Nixon gave the example of the case in which a former Skamania auditor was [found guilty](#) of illegally using public funds for private purposes and of illegal destruction of records.

Of course, Nixon said, it is not always the case that the possibility of criminal prosecution for records destruction is considered in conjunction with other crimes: “We do have the case with [former Mayor Jenny Durkan’s] [text messages](#), and the King County prosecutor has said they are investigating that case for potential criminal charges.”

State law fails to specify which law enforcement agency has jurisdiction over this kind of crime. In a June article about the ongoing Durkan texts saga, Will Casey at *The Stranger* pointed out that the State’s Public Records Act (PRA) “makes this game of hot potato possible. While the law makes ‘[willful](#)’ destruction of a public record a class C felony, it doesn’t explicitly name the office or agency responsible for investigating the person who destroyed the record.

“That might be because this portion of Washington’s criminal code hasn’t been substantively updated since 1909,” the article continues.

Given that Bettsworth was a high-ranking OPA official with years of experience as a City employee — and thus years of experience with records retention policies and practices — and that OPA officials undergo basic records management training, it is equally unclear in this case whether allowing said records to expire would potentially count as willful destruction.

If Bettsworth did in fact retain emails related to this request, as required by law, but officials chose to withhold them, then that would also be illegal. Doing so would constitute the “withholding” portion of the RCW’s detailing of the actions that the State considers a records felony.

The *Emerald* reached out to the City of Seattle’s records retention team in the City Clerk’s office on Oct. 25 to ask what kind of training City employees receive and whether there are ways to recover records that were deleted or that expired after 90 days in violation of state law.

The City Clerk’s office responded, telling the *Emerald* the following in an Oct. 26 email: *The City Records Management Program (CRMP) provides the following training opportunities for City Employees:*

- *Basic Records Management (covers the key aspects of records management) — This training was automated in the summer of 2022 to be an online training program automatically assigned to all employees upon hiring. Prior to that time, new employees received records management training during their new employee orientation sessions from a CRMP staff member.*
- *Supplemental training sessions (Basic Records Management, Email Management, File Structure and Management, and Electronic Records Management) — These trainings are offered regularly by the CRMP and are optional for City Employees.*

The *Emerald* followed up to ask what kind of training was offered before 2022, and what is covered in basic records training. The City Clerk’s office told the *Emerald* in a subsequent email that the basic pre-summer 2022 records management training course for City employees included the “[d]efinition of a public record,” “[r]esponsibilities of City employees,” “[r]etention policy overview,” and “[e]mail management.” The same trainings and more have been provided since summer 2022.

The City Clerk’s office directed the *Emerald* to ask the City’s information technology (IT) department about recovering records that should not have been deleted or allowed to expire. The IT department

responded to tell the *Emerald* that “[t]he City of Seattle’s Microsoft Outlook platform automatically retains all emails for 90 days in an employee’s inbox. Emails in the deleted items folders are retained for 14 days. Emails in recoverable files are retained for 14 days.

“City employees are instructed to move emails they’d like to save to preservation folders to extend [the] retention date. It is up to the City employee to save emails based on need and retention requirements,” the IT department continued. “If an employee’s emails are on hold due to the nature of work or litigation, the emails will be retained until the business need has been fulfilled, or the relevant matter has been resolved in compliance with the applicable state retention schedules and applicable court rules.”

The IT department also said that “elected officials, upon beginning their work with the City, also receive specific training on record retention as required by RCW [42.56.150](#),” and that, in addition to the training the City Clerk’s office detailed, City of Seattle employees “will be required to take an additional new training specifically on record retention.”

The *Emerald* asked SPD on Oct. 13 about its 90-day retention schedule and asked for clarity regarding the justification for this policy. The *Emerald* also asked what emails the department considers deletable after 90 days.

SPD’s public information department did not directly answer the *Emerald*’s questions, and instead sent a brief email on Oct. 19 that read, “The Seattle Police Department follows retention schedules set by the Washington Secretary of State and City of Seattle.” The department attached copies of the City’s and State’s record retention laws, which, again, seem to run counter to the OPA’s stated policies of following City department retention protocol.

The *Emerald* has filed with the OPA a public records request similar to the request described at the beginning of this story. The scheduled first fulfillment date for this records request is on or around Nov. 21. Because Bettesworth’s email was provided to a public records official within SPD in the original public records request, that email has become part of the public record and should be returned to the *Emerald* in the subsequent request. Depending on the outcome of the request as a whole, the *Emerald* may either update this story with any new information that becomes available or release another story.

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HEADLINE	11/15 DOJ probes Massachusetts police dept.
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/justice-dept-begins-probe-of-massachusetts-police-department/
GIST	<p>BOSTON (AP) — Federal prosecutors on Tuesday announced an investigation into whether the police department in Massachusetts’ second-largest city routinely uses excessive force or discriminates against residents based on race or gender.</p> <p>The civil investigation into the Worcester Police Department will review how the agency addresses misconduct complaints and discipline; review department policies, procedures and training; and evaluate how officers interact with the public, collect evidence, and complete investigations, the U.S. attorney’s office in Boston said in a statement.</p> <p>“Based on information provided to the Justice Department, we find significant justification to investigate whether the Worcester Police Department engages in a pattern or practice of racially discriminatory and gender-biased policing, and uses excessive force,” Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division said in a statement.</p> <p>The “majority of Worcester’s officers do their jobs with honor, pride, restraint and distinction,” said U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts Rachael Rollins, but she added that the investigation’s “ultimate goal is to</p>

ensure that policing in Worcester is constitutional, safe, and effective all while the civil rights of their residents remain intact”

City leaders pledged full cooperation with the investigation.

“The city and Worcester Police Department collectively strive to deliver the highest quality of municipal services to residents and will continue to do so in a transparent and professional manner as the investigation takes its course,” police Chief Steven Sargent, Mayor Joseph Petty and acting City Manager Eric Batista said in a statement.

Worcester has roughly 200,000 residents and is about 40 miles (65 kilometers) west of Boston. More than 23% of its population is Latino or Hispanic, and 13% is Black or African American, according to Census Bureau statistics.

The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 prohibits state and local governments from engaging in a pattern or practice of conduct by law enforcement officers that deprives individuals of rights protected by the Constitution or federal law, federal prosecutors said.

The Justice Department conducted a similar investigation of the Springfield Police Department that was settled earlier this year with a consent decree.

The U.S. attorney’s office did not point to any specific incidents that spurred the investigation, but in April, a Black man sued the city and five officers saying he was wrongfully charged with murder based on his race and what his attorneys called fabricated evidence.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Hiring police officer problems in Portland
SOURCE	https://ricochet.com/1338131/hiring-police-officer-problems-in-portland/
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (KPTV) – Despite public refrains about problems recruiting new officers, the Portland Police Bureau’s internal hiring statistics paint a different picture of the bureau’s staffing issues.</p> <p>According to the police bureau’s 2021 Annual Report, 42 sworn officers retired that year, and 58 more chose to leave the bureau in what it calls “unplanned separations.” But despite the departures, there was strong interest in the bureau’s open officer positions. <i>Six hundred and seventy-five people applied for the job, and the bureau conducted 568 background checks, but only 27 officers were ultimately hired, just 4% of those who applied, and well short of the bureau’s internal goals.</i></p> <p>“Ten percent historically has kind of been the number that we’ve worked with,” said Sgt. Trevor Tyler, who works in the bureau’s personnel division.</p> <p>Of the 675 that applied to the Portland Police Bureau, 568 passed the written test and the oral interview to enter the background check phase of the hiring process. The report lists two of the most common problems that eliminate candidates:</p> <p>Tyler said two common barriers to entry for applicants are spotty driving records and recent marijuana use.</p> <p>“If you’ve had three tickets within the last three years, I’m prohibited from being able to move you forward in the process because I have to be able to get you insured by the City of Portland,” said Tyler.</p> <p>As for marijuana, which has been legal in Oregon since 2016, a federal mandate that requires no marijuana use in the past 12 months for officers to access the federal system to run background checks on suspects.</p> <p>“And the problem is that some of the people that we get in front of or some of the people that decide they want to be police officers, six months ago when they were at a party, they might have partaken in marijuana products, and now they have to wait for six more months until they can apply,” said Tyler.</p>

There can be other problems that are discovered in the background check. Poor credit, failure to file taxes, poor work history, dishonorable discharge from the armed forces, LSD and Heroin use, and other criminal activity, to name a few more disqualifiers to become a PPB officer.

The 58 “unplanned separations” might include the 150+ nights of rioting in 2020, although the media in Portland has trouble discerning the difference between “protests” and riots, police officers do not have that problem.

A Multnomah County District Attorney that is more interested in prosecuting police officers rather than criminals, albeit one that is not as outspoken as other Soros prosecutors in other states.

There is, of course, a dysfunctional city council that has been more than willing to blame the PPB for its policy failures.

The City of Portland covers about 145 square miles, population is about 666,249. The Portland Metro area has a population of about 2.3 million residents.

[According to a report](#) from The City of Portland:

PPB has 322 patrol officers to work three precincts 24/7 and answer 911 calls. This is not the total number of officers working at one time. Officers work four 10-hour shifts and have 3 days off per week. Patrol officers also have vacations, sick time, family leave and required training.

PPB Sworn Staffing Report:

Report Date: 11/08/2022

Sworn Members: 792

Officers: 530

Officers in Training: 86

Patrol Officers: 322

.....East Officers: 113

.....Central Officers: 102

.....North Officers: 107

At one time, non-emergency calls were the low priority, 9-1-1 calls were high priority. You might have to wait far longer than you should if you call 9-1-1, you might have to wait even longer for any follow-up investigation.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Missile from Ukraine air defense?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/missile-that-hit-poland-likely-launched-by-ukraine-in-air-defense-western-officials-say-11668589786?mod=hp_lead_pos4
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS—The missile that crashed in Poland on Tuesday, killing two people, was from a Ukrainian air-defense system, according to two senior Western officials briefed on preliminary U.S. assessments, but Poland is continuing its own investigation of the explosion.</p> <p>The initial findings will be discussed Wednesday at an emergency meeting at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, where ambassadors from the alliance’s 30 members are set to review intelligence and consider their options.</p> <p>Polish President Andrzej Duda late Tuesday spoke with President Biden and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg about the situation. The Group of Seven advanced economies issued a statement offering support to Poland and condemning Russia’s attacks on civilian targets across Ukraine.</p> <p>President Biden said Tuesday that preliminary information about the missile strike indicates that it was unlikely to have been fired from Russia and pledged to investigate the incident.</p>

	<p>Senior Ukrainian officials said Tuesday that it was a Russian missile that crossed into Poland.</p> <p>The Polish deaths appear to be the first fatalities on the terrain of a NATO country to be directly linked to hostilities following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Poland is considering asking NATO countries to begin special high-level consultations. The consultations, known as Article IV in reference to NATO's founding treaty, are a step short of invoking the alliance's mutual-defense pact, known as Article V.</p> <p>While initial analyses of missile fragments and radar coverage of the area point to the projectile having been launched from Ukraine, NATO officials will have in mind that the country on Tuesday was defending itself against a barrage of missiles Russia launched against civilian targets across the country. The fusillade of at least 85 projectiles was among the biggest Russia has fired since its large-scale invasion of Ukraine began in February.</p> <p>Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal informed his Polish counterpart, Mateusz Morawiecki, that many of the missiles Russia fired Tuesday were aimed at electrical infrastructure near Ukraine's border with Poland, Polish government spokesman Piotr Müller wrote on Twitter on Wednesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Shift in US-China relationship ties
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-xi-talks-mark-shift-in-u-s-china-ties-toward-managing-fierce-competition-11668534046?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>NUSA DUA, Indonesia—A few weeks after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's August visit to Taiwan, advisers to President Biden quietly opened back-channel talks with a senior Chinese diplomat. Beijing had largely severed lines of communication with the U.S. government, and the two sides were looking for a way forward.</p> <p>Over frequent video and phone calls throughout the subsequent weeks, the group laid the groundwork for the first face-to-face meeting between the U.S. and Chinese presidents since Mr. Biden was elected, according to U.S. officials. The negotiations continued up to the day of the meeting, with senior Biden administration officials huddled with their Chinese counterparts until 3 a.m. on Monday at a hotel in Bali, Indonesia, before that day's talks, U.S. and Chinese officials said.</p> <p>The meeting between Mr. Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping stretched over three hours, covering thorny issues such as their differences over Taiwan, Russia's war in Ukraine and ways to ensure that the U.S.-China rivalry doesn't flare into open conflict. Mr. Xi offered a firm defense of Communist Party rule in China and grew particularly animated when he spoke about Taiwan, providing a detailed history of the self-ruled island that Beijing sees as part of its territory, according to Chinese officials.</p> <p>But Mr. Biden and his advisers also came away with the impression that China had no imminent plans to invade Taiwan, although Mr. Xi didn't say so explicitly, one of the U.S. officials said. To Mr. Biden's team, it appeared the Chinese leader was seeking stability and predictability at an uncertain time in China. A downturn in the property market and the country's zero-Covid policies have throttled the economic growth that proceeded at a breakneck pace for decades.</p> <p>In the end, the meeting largely accomplished what the two sides set out to achieve, restoring dialogue between the two major powers and a measure of stability to a relationship that had deteriorated to its lowest point since the 1970s.</p> <p>But it also marked a new phase in U.S.-China relations—one that is focused on managing the fierce competition between the two economic powers, preventing conflict and finding common ground when they can. It is a departure from past administrations, which have centered more heavily on striking economic deals, finding new business opportunities or expanding cooperation.</p>

In this phase of the relationship, Chinese and U.S. officials said, Beijing and Washington must work out how to coexist—and avoid, or at least postpone, a conflagration.

For decades, successive American presidents pursued a policy of engagement with Beijing, focused on developing economic and cultural ties that Washington hoped would spur China's shift toward a Western-style democratic system. Many Chinese officials, meanwhile, wanted to tap foreign expertise to boost their country's economic development.

China and the U.S. once worked together under the rubric of globalization, but the powers now increasingly clash over issues spanning politics, trade and technology. [Many lawmakers and analysts in Washington](#) are convinced China poses a grave threat to U.S. interests. [Mr. Xi and his lieutenants](#), meanwhile, often assert that “the East is rising, and the West is declining”—and that China is destined to reclaim its rightful place as a great power.

The U.S. has ramped up pressure on China across economic, diplomatic and military fronts in recent years, a shift that started under President Trump and continued under Mr. Biden. Mr. Trump imposed tariffs on Chinese goods in an effort to rebalance the trade relationship and restore American industrial might. Mr. Biden has kept those tariffs in place and imposed new measures aimed at [curbing exports of advanced semiconductors to China](#).

U.S. officials, nonetheless, wanted to resume the type of extensive, face-to-face talks that Messrs. Biden and Xi first held when they served as vice president of their respective countries. During a phone call in July, the two leaders directed their teams to explore the possibility of an in-person meeting, officials from both countries said.

Then in August, Mrs. Pelosi traveled to Taiwan, the first visit to the island by a House speaker in 25 years. Beijing viewed the visit as a sign of growing U.S. support for the island and [launched large-scale military exercises](#) in response while cutting off key lines of communication between the two governments.

The Chinese government had in the past limited communication as a diplomatic tactic, but the discord after Mrs. Pelosi's visit was extensive, U.S. officials said. China said it would shut down some military communication channels and began limiting engagement on climate change, economics and global health. The U.S. ambassador to China, Nicholas Burns, was frozen out by officials in Beijing, the U.S. officials said.

The president's team, including White House Asia adviser Kurt Campbell, were able to keep an open line with Qin Gang, the Chinese ambassador to the U.S., and back-channels with lower-level officials in Beijing, officials said. But beyond that, they said their outreach to Chinese officials was often met with silence. Mr. Qin was also having trouble finding people in the U.S. business community who were willing to engage with him, according to people who spoke with him.

That stalemate began to thaw in September, when Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with China's foreign minister at a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. There, Laura Rosenberger, a special assistant to Mr. Biden and senior director for China at the National Security Council, and a top State Department official, Daniel Kritenbrink, met with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng, U.S. officials said.

Mr. Xie once worked under Yang Jiechi, who retired as Mr. Xi's top foreign-policy adviser last month, at the Chinese Embassy in Washington. Peers describe Mr. Xie as low key and careful—some say overly cautious.

Mr. Xie has taken on a leading role in managing ties with Washington since he became vice foreign minister in early 2021. He played a key role in negotiations for [the 2021 release of a well-connected Chinese executive](#), Meng Wanzhou, from Canadian custody—a case that stemmed from U.S. criminal

charges against Ms. Meng. She admitted to some wrongdoing in exchange for prosecutors deferring and later dropping fraud charges.

Ms. Rosenberger and Mr. Xie agreed to quietly revive a communication channel that had been used to help plan previous virtual conversations between Messrs. Xi and Biden, the U.S. officials said. Though the focus of the discussions was a possible meeting between the two countries' leaders, Ms. Rosenberger also pressed Mr. Xie on other issues, such as restoring communication with Mr. Burns in Beijing, the officials said.

As part of the preparations for Monday's bilateral meeting, Mr. Biden's team reviewed the two leaders' past encounters, "every utterance between President Biden and President Xi, looking for clues for what would be important," one of the officials said.

When Messrs. Biden and Xi met on Monday ahead of [a summit of the Group of 20 major economies in Indonesia](#), they were largely the only people who spoke, officials on both sides said. American officials came away thinking that Mr. Xi's team had closely researched Western criticisms about China's one-party system, and Mr. Xi tried to rebut those narratives point by point, according to a person briefed on the proceedings.

Mr. Xi had spent hours before the meeting reviewing talking points on Taiwan, according to people familiar with the matter. He also made changes to the talking points, to better reflect his thoughts on the issue, one of the people said. Mr. Xi spent considerable time discussing historical narratives about mainland China and Taiwan, in order to convey to Mr. Biden that while China wishes to unify Taiwan with the mainland, Beijing hopes it doesn't have to do so by force, they said.

U.S. and Chinese officials said the meeting was expected to last two hours but went on for three, with a break in between. To ensure Messrs. Biden and Xi could make the best use of their time together, the two sides agreed to use simultaneous interpretation, meaning interpreters translated as participants spoke, instead of waiting for speakers to finish before translating—a method that is customary for important summit meetings, the officials said.

In a news conference after the meeting, Mr. Biden said he had "open and candid" discussions with Mr. Xi, whom he said came across as "direct and straightforward" in laying down China's positions. "We were very blunt with one another about places where we disagreed or where we were uncertain of each other's position," Mr. Biden said.

U.S. officials said they have been poring over the meeting's transcript for more clues about Mr. Xi's thinking. They said they believe that Mr. Xi is committed to empowering his top advisers to restore regular communication, though that may take time, they said, in part because of [the sweeping leadership changes](#) Mr. Xi is making since he took a third term as Communist Party chief last month.

Chinese officials and state media portrayed the meeting in positive terms. State media released video footage and images that showed Messrs. Xi and Biden smiling broadly as they shook hands and spoke to each other.

The summit, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said, helped "set a clear direction, which is to prevent China-U.S. relations from derailing and getting out of control."

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HEADLINE	11/15 RSV, flu overwhelm pediatric hospitals
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3714944/rsv-exacerbates-staffing-shortages-local-pediatric-hospitals/
GIST	<p>According to the Washington State Hospital Association, pediatric hospitals are operating under a series of crises, from staffing shortages to bed infrastructure to behavioral health.</p> <p>The two largest children's hospitals in western Washington, Mary Bridge Children's Hospital in Tacoma and Seattle Children's Hospital, continue to experience crowded conditions because of the large number of</p>

patients with RSV. All hospitals in our state say they continue to be overloaded with cases of respiratory illness—particularly in children.

RSV is a respiratory virus inundating emergency rooms throughout the state when pediatric hospitals are already dealing with a rise in cold and flu cases. There are a variety of symptoms, but the most common are difficulty breathing and a loss of appetite, specifically among infants.

Tony Woodward, Seattle Children’s Hospital’s Medical Director of Emergency Medicine, said they are operating at “100% capacity almost 24 hours a day and in the evenings up to 300% capacity.”

“It’s a huge volume, huge surges, the viruses, the triple-demic as we’ve talked about, that’s really a twin-demic at the moment with the flu and RSV,” Woodward said. “[There’s] a lack of availability in the hospitals which are full, and a lack of availability in the communities which are full, compounded by the staffing crisis in all those places, has really led to a spot where the [emergency department] is the last resort for many of these patients.”

The pairing of more patients and low hospital staffing has made it incredibly difficult for hospitals to accommodate patients quickly, and Woodward said he does not see the crunch ending any time soon.

“We know that RSV came a couple of weeks ago, and RSV is a disease we see every year, it came a little earlier than expected on top of some COVID, which was dropping a little bit,” Woodward said. “And now, in the last week or so, the flu has raised its head. So we’re going to have an awful lot of very sick children, many who just need symptomatic therapy for many who are sick.”

Most RSV infections resolve themselves without medical intervention in approximately one to two weeks. Still, for kids with underlying lung or cardiovascular problems, the illness can become more serious. In fact, Seattle Children’s reported Monday night was on target to be the busiest night they’ve ever had in the emergency room.

Hospital officials say people should still come to the emergency room in a true emergency — but should look to urgent care or their primary care provider as a first resource.

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HEADLINE	11/15 County: homeless initiative ‘unacceptable’
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3714869/snohomish-county-officials-cant-house-everyone-living-rights-way/
GIST	<p>Snohomish County officials said they don’t have space to house homeless people living on public property.</p> <p>The effort to house those living on state property is part of the state’s Right of Way Initiative. It’s a proposal from Gov. Jay Inslee as part of his overall efforts to combat homelessness.</p> <p>Inslee said at a recent event, “Because of this initiative that has been so aggressive on this, we have been able to get people in housing in weeks rather than decades.”</p> <p>WSDOT says ‘Rights of Way’ are dangerous for the homeless</p> <p>The Department of Transportation wrote in a Sept. 30 post the initiative is important because of “the inherent risk these sites pose to anyone on them [Right of Way].</p> <p>“Vehicles pass these locations at 70 mph ... These are not safe places for people to be living.”</p> <p>The initiative, however, has drawn fire from some government officials, including Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin.</p> <p>In a statement from Franklin, she said the initiative posed an “unacceptable burden for our city to bear.</p>

“Navigating the expanding homeless crisis is extremely complex and requires open communication, strategic partnerships, and strategy planning,” Franklin wrote.

She said she learned about the Washington Department of Transportation moving homeless people to Everett hotels secondhand. Franklin wrote it was important for the city to “have a seat at the table.”

Snohomish County has 1,000 beds during cold weather periods

[The Everett Herald reports](#) that human services director MJ Brell Vujovic said the county has 683 shelter beds year-round, a quarter of which are open through a voucher program.

Cold weather beds, along with two new hotels coming online, will bring the total number of beds up to nearly 1,000.

Still, the mayor’s office said that’s not enough space and that the city needs to coordinate with the appropriate parties on this effort. She said the city needs to be in the loop.

“Such accusations undermine our collective ability to do the work the public demands and unhoused individuals need,” read a statement from the heads of the state departments of Commerce and Transportation as well as the Washington State Patrol.

In a later statement, the mayor wrote, “I will not be issuing a public retraction or apology for my statements, and I reiterate my request to immediately cease the placement of unsheltered individuals in Everett motels until further discussion can take place.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 Midwest snowstorm heads to the Northeast
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/11/15/storm-snow-chicago-buffalo-weather/
GIST	<p>The winter solstice won’t arrive for another 36 days, but a cold and snowy pattern more typical of midwinter has become entrenched in the central and northeastern United States. A multiphase snow event is delivering a swath of snowfall blanketing St. Louis, Minneapolis, Des Moines and Chicago, and it could set the stage for a whopper winter-weather storm eyeing the eastern Great Lakes, including Buffalo, later this week.</p> <p>The snow is coming in a three-part act, the prologue of which the atmosphere performed on Monday across the south-central United States. A narrow swath of heavy snow plastered Oklahoma with up to 7.3 inches in the town of Elk City, about 100 miles west of Oklahoma City. Now that same system is heading northeast.</p> <p>The wintry blitz is wrapped up within a blast of frigid air spilling south and east out of Canada, with quickly plummeting temperatures bringing a sudden seasonal reversal. Chicago hit 76 degrees on Thursday, only to peak at 36 on Saturday afternoon. Now, it’s under a winter-weather advisory.</p> <p>Temperatures in Boston fell more than 30 degrees, from 76 on Friday to 44 on Sunday, and even Washington — where 10 of the first 12 days of the month climbed into the 70s — will struggle to escape the 40s. Snow is set to fall in the mountains west of these East Coast hubs.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the National Weather Service in Buffalo is warning of the possibility of a “crippling” snowstorm for areas downwind of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, from Thursday into the weekend.</p> <p>The setup</p> <p>On Monday morning, a storm system formed along a cold front in Oklahoma and Kansas. The system, energized by a high-altitude disturbance kicking east out of the Texas Panhandle, swirled chilly air into the Sooner State. That stacked the deck in favor of snow as moisture rode north along the front, resulting in a narrow, albeit intense, band of heavy snow.</p>

That same system headed east, with snow on Tuesday from southern Illinois all the way through Wisconsin and into southern Manitoba and Ontario.

Meanwhile, moisture collecting on the front along the Gulf of Mexico coastline in Louisiana will blossom into its own new storm system, which will ride up the East Coast. The East Coast system will deliver “wraparound” snows on its cool air backside come Wednesday and Thursday. Then frosty westerly winds in its wake will blow lengthwise along Lakes Erie and Ontario, causing very heavy snows to their east.

Act I: Oklahoma snowstorm

Leading up to Monday’s snow in Oklahoma, forecasters at the National Weather Service in Norman had warned of a “high risk of disappointment.” There were a number of off-ramps that could have led to a “busted” forecast — and the razor-thin edge of the heaviest snow made communicating impacts even more difficult.

Despite the hurdles, a localized corridor of half a foot or more of snow materialized, impacting areas west of the Oklahoma City metro area. The jackpot was in Elk City, but Cheyenne in western Oklahoma saw 5.3 inches, and Sayre, Hinton, Geary and Clinton got four.

That proved Clinton’s earliest 4-inch snow on record, eclipsing the 4 inches that came down on Nov. 20, 1988.

Act II: Snow in the Midwest, Appalachians and Northeast

The snow has wound down in Oklahoma and on the Plains, but flakes are falling steadily in the Midwest. A broad 1 to 3 inches was expected in an area — the eastern two-thirds of Iowa, parts of Missouri and northern Illinois — blanketed by winter weather advisories through midday Tuesday. Downtown Chicago was encompassed in the current advisory, but the Windy City will see the bulk of its inch or two come down on Tuesday night on the storm’s backside.

Through Tuesday morning, about an inch had fallen just west of Chicago and around St. Louis, about 2 inches in Des Moines and 2 to 3 inches around Minneapolis.

As Tuesday wears on, wintry precipitation is forecast to spread over the Appalachians and interior northeast as the storm — currently headed toward the Ohio Valley — shifts its energy toward a new storm system forming along the East Coast.

Cold air is banking up in the mountains and will allow freezing rain to fall even in the mountains of western South Carolina on Tuesday, with the main hazard becoming snow in the high terrain of West Virginia and Virginia. Cumberland, Md., on Interstate 68, a key passage through the Appalachians, could be looking at 1 to 3 inches through Tuesday night; the bulk of any accumulation in the interior Mid-Atlantic will be relegated to locations above 1,000 feet and [especially above 2,500 feet](#).

The snows will become more widespread north of the Mason-Dixon line, with a general 1 to 4 inches in northern Pennsylvania, most of New York state, the Berkshires in western Massachusetts and parts of Vermont and New Hampshire through Wednesday night. Lesser totals are expected in the hills northwest of Hartford, Conn. Three to five inches may fall Wednesday and Wednesday night in western Maine, with a half foot or more possible in Aroostook, Penobscot, Piscataquis and Somerset counties. That’s where a winter storm watch is in effect.

Act III: A major lake-effect snow dump

By Thursday, the low pressure system bringing snow to the interior Northeast will truck into the Canadian Maritimes, swinging its trailing cold front east and allowing cold air to spread toward the coast. At the same time, a dip in the jet stream, within which will be nestled a bone-chilling Canadian air mass at high altitudes, will become stuck over the Great Lakes.

That means cold, westerly to west-southwesterly flow a mile or two above the ground. That should entail cold wind blowing lengthwise down Lakes Erie and Ontario, which have water temperatures still in the

	<p>50s. The stark contrast should allow for robust lake-effect snow plumes to become established, with totals of several feet possible downwind. Snowfall rates of 1 to 3 inches per hour, whiteout conditions, thundersnow and blizzard conditions will be possible within the heaviest bands, which may only be a few miles wide. Unsurprisingly, if a given locations remains stuck in one of said bands for long enough, the totals could become extreme in short order.</p> <p>The key time frame to watch would be Thursday through early Sunday.</p> <p>“Total snow accumulations in this long duration event of MULTIPLE feet will be possible in the most persistent lake snows,” wrote the National Weather Service in Buffalo.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Russia sees role on global stage diminished
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/11/15/russia-ukraine-g20-cop27-lavrov/
GIST	<p>SHARM EL-SHEIKH, EGYPT — From the U.N. climate negotiations at this beach resort on the Red Sea to the Group of 20 meetings on the shores of Bali, Russian diplomats found themselves on the outside looking in at key global gatherings this week — shunned and excluded over Vladimir Putin’s war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Russia had big plans for the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Egypt, known as COP27, scheduling four roundtable discussions. No foreigners agreed to speak on the panel; the Russians were left to talk among themselves.</p> <p>“I invited everybody but nobody [will come],” lamented former NHL star Viacheslav Fetisov, who is a member of the Russian state Duma and chairman of the All-Russian Society for Nature Conservation.</p> <p>Fetisov scrolled through his phone, pointing to prewar photos showing meetings with U.S. climate envoy John F. Kerry. In one shot, Kerry held up a hockey jersey on which Fetisov had written in permanent marker: “John, get ready and let’s play hockey at North Pole and change the world for better! Your Russian friend, Slava Fetisov.”</p> <p>“Right now, I don’t think [Kerry] will shake hands with Slava,” said Sergey Rybakov, another member of the delegation, using Fetisov’s nickname.</p> <p>The war has loomed large over the climate conference. Just weeks before it opened, Russia began waging intense attacks against Ukraine’s energy infrastructure, adding to mounting concerns about the global energy crisis set off by the Russian invasion. At the G-20, the annual gathering of world powers, Russia has also found itself in an unusual position: a leading topic of discussion rather than a leading player.</p> <p>Egyptian President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi — who has remained friendly to Russia throughout the war, welcoming Russian tourists and hosting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov earlier this year — used his COP27 speech to call for an end to the fighting. “This is a call from our conference,” he said. “Let this destruction and killing end.”</p> <p>Speaking to delegates by video call, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia of waging war not only against the Ukrainian people but against the country’s natural resources.</p> <p>British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who addressed the conference in Sharm el-Sheikh last week, said: “Putin’s abhorrent war in Ukraine, and rising energy prices across the world, are not a reason to go slow on climate change. They are a reason to act faster.”</p> <p>In Bali, Sunak has promised to “call out Putin’s regime,” and Canadian leader Justin Trudeau said he had “no interest” in speaking to Lavrov, who is attending the G-20 in place of Putin. Trudeau’s goal at the summit, he said, was to ensure “that the world comes together to reinforce that Putin made a terrible, terrible choice when he decided to invade a peaceful neighboring country.”</p>

Unlike at previous G-20 summits, there is not likely to be a “family photo” at the end of this year’s meetings in Bali, in part because several government leaders said they would not participate if Russian delegates were present, Indonesian officials said.

A White House official noted that leaders of the Group of 7 countries — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain and the United States — have not participated in any group photos with Russian officials in nearly 15 meetings this year.

“Russia is waging war and killing innocent civilians,” said the White House official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to speak freely. “I think it’s sensible there is no family photo from any perspective, not just the U.S.”

When asked if the Russian delegation felt sidelined at COP27, Fetisov scoffed. “What do you think?” he replied.

Russia is one of the world’s largest emitters of greenhouse gases, and Fetisov said it was shortsighted to ignore his country’s perspective at the global climate talks.

“Without Russia, you cannot solve these problems,” Fetisov said of the climate crisis. “The conflict [in Ukraine] could be over tomorrow. But you’re missing another year to make the right decision for the future.”

“We did not come to Egypt to talk about the Ukraine situation,” he added. “We came here to share our worries ... share our experience ... share our knowledge.”

The experience has been sobering for Fetisov — once celebrated as a Stanley Cup champion in the United States, now sanctioned by Washington for voting in favor of Russia’s illegal annexation of Ukraine’s Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

He is banned from traveling to many countries, including the United States, where his daughter lives. “If [COP27] was going to be in another part of the world, I wouldn’t have been able to come,” he said.

The same is true for members of the Russian delegation at the G-20 in Indonesia.

For months leading up to the summit, Indonesian officials worried that Putin would attend, causing other world leaders to boycott the event. Two days before the summit, and hours after Russian troops were forced to withdraw from the Ukrainian city of Kherson, the Russian Embassy in Indonesia announced that Putin would not be attending and that Lavrov would take his place.

Bali Gov. Wayan Koster greeted Lavrov with a performance by Balinese dancers when he touched down on the island Sunday evening. But on Monday, as other G-20 leaders kicked off packed schedules of bilateral meetings and panel discussions, Lavrov was largely missing in action.

Citing Indonesian officials, the Associated Press reported that he had taken ill after arriving — a claim swiftly dismissed by Russia’s Foreign Ministry, which shared a video of him reviewing documents in his beachside hotel. The muted presence of the Russian delegation marks a sharp contrast to the G-20 conference in 2019, the last one Putin attended in person, and where he made a splash by meeting with the United States, China, India and others.

A spokesman for the Russian Embassy in Indonesia did not respond to inquiries on whether Lavrov planned to meet with any officials on the sidelines of the summit. China has not announced any formal meetings with Russia, though Beijing joined Moscow on Tuesday in opposing the use of the word “war” in a joint communique to describe the invasion of Ukraine.

Activist groups say world leaders need to go beyond condemnations at the G-20. “If all Western powers want to do in Bali is belittle Russia, they will find that a lot of non-Western colleagues will not play

along,” said Richard Gowan, who oversees advocacy at the United Nations for the International Crisis Group. Western countries need to work with leaders from China and India to persuade Russia to reject the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Gowan said.

On Tuesday evening, the Russian delegation drew a small crowd at a COP27 event, but it was quickly disrupted by activists: “You are war criminals!” one shouted. “You are killing my people!” another yelled. U.N. security escorted them out of the room.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Sick kids keeping parents from work
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/11/15/work-absences-childcare/
GIST	<p>This fall has been a blur of runny noses, body aches and lost paychecks for Jacob Terry.</p> <p>His 18-month-old daughter came home from day care with Respiratory Syncytial Virus a few weeks ago. Now he’s got it, too, while trying to juggle child care responsibilities with his job as a marketing freelancer.</p> <p>“My daughter’s at home, she’s sick, I’m sick,” said Terry, 39, who lives near Los Angeles. “If I don’t work, I don’t eat. I’m medicating myself and staying up all night to catch up. It’s one big mess.”</p> <p>A new round of viral infections — flu, RSV, covid-19 and the common cold — is colliding with staffing shortages at schools and day cares to create unprecedented challenges for parents and teachers. More than 100,000 Americans missed work last month because of child-care problems, an all-time high that’s even greater than during the height of the pandemic, according to new data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.</p> <p>Those absences are rippling across the economy and straining families and businesses, just as many thought they’d turned a corner.</p> <p>“We have sick kids at the same time we have a child-care crisis — you put the two together and there just isn’t any wiggle room,” said Diane Swonk, chief economist at KPMG. “People are falling through the cracks. It means missed paychecks, disruptions at home, and staffing shortages that erode productivity growth and increase costs at a time when we’re already worried about those things.”</p> <p>Nearly three years into the coronavirus pandemic, families, businesses and health-care facilities say they’re under renewed pressure. Children’s hospitals nationwide are at capacity, in large part because of RSV and other respiratory viruses. Workplaces are reporting unfilled shifts and lost revenue as employees call out for extended periods of time. And parents are, once again, caught in an impossible position, balancing sick children, school closures and workplace demands.</p> <p>There are signs that those pressures are taking a toll on the economy. Worker productivity — a measure of goods and services an employee can produce in an hour — posted the sharpest plunge on record in the first half of this year, according to federal data.</p> <p>“When you have so many workers out unexpectedly, it’s a quiet drag on productivity,” said Sarah House, senior economist at Wells Fargo. “Child care has always been an impediment for working parents, but the problems with inconsistent child care that we’ve seen more recently — your child is sick or has to quarantine, or day care is closed — is making it really difficult for working parents to weave back into the labor force.”</p> <p>The country’s child-care system is still reeling from the departure of thousands of educators and staffers who left during the pandemic for higher-paying work. Although the overall job market has more than made up for early 2020 losses, the child-care sector remains a major exception. Public schools are still short nearly 300,000 workers, while day cares are down 88,000 employees from pre-pandemic levels.</p>

“We still haven’t dealt with some of the major problems from early in the pandemic, especially when it comes to child care,” said Elizabeth Palley, a professor at Adelphi University who focuses on education, health and child-care policy. “The median child-care worker is paid less than \$12 an hour, which means you can make more working at McDonald’s. A lot of people have left the industry and new ones are not coming in.”

That shortfall is putting increased burden on the educators who remain. In interviews, many teachers said they felt they had little choice but to keep working while sick. Dozens of schools — including in Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee — have gone so far as to cancel classes in recent days because so many students and teachers are sick.

Kathryn Vaughn, an art teacher in Covington, Tenn., works at a rural elementary school that’s so understaffed that she’s kept teaching — with a mask — even with RSV and walking pneumonia. Roughly 15 percent of the school’s teachers are out sick on any given day, with RSV, covid or flu, she said.

Substitute teachers — who are paid \$65 a day — are increasingly tough to find. That means more classes are being combined and support staff, including secretaries, are filling in for teachers. Five nearby school districts, she said, have recently closed for days at a time because of illness and staffing shortages.

“It feels like we’ve made absolutely no progress,” Vaughn, 42, said. “We don’t have enough teachers. Access to health care is still an issue — a lot of students here don’t have pediatricians they see regularly. Hospitals all over the state are shutting down.”

Infectious-disease specialists say a confluence of factors, including weakened immune systems from covid-19, could be contributing to the recent spike in viral illnesses. It’s also possible that “pandemic babies” who were protected from respiratory pathogens because of social distancing and other preventive measures are now getting sick. And although many schools encouraged, even required, masks last fall, that is no longer the case, making it easier for a variety of viruses to spread.

In Lincoln, Neb., Lindsey Dick had just started a new job as a case manager for a workforce services company in mid-October when her 3-year-old son came down with RSV. Dick, 37, didn’t have paid time off yet, so she took unpaid leave for a day. Her husband watched their son the rest of the week while working his tech-support job from home.

“It was just quite a lot for all of us,” she said. “I could only miss one day and even that felt stressful.”

Low-income families — especially those less likely to receive paid sick leave and employer-provided health insurance — have been [hit disproportionately hard](#). While 96 percent of the country’s highest paid workers received paid sick leave last year, [only 40 percent](#) of the lowest earners did, according to [federal data](#).

In Sevier County, Tenn., neither Drew Moore nor his wife, Raven, receive paid leave. Their children, ages 2 and 4, have been sick for weeks, which means they’ve both had to cut back at work, cutting into their annual household income of about \$30,000. Moore said he’s lost out on thousands of dollars’ worth of landscaping projects this fall, while his wife has had to forego lucrative weekend shifts at the steakhouse where she works.

The timing is especially bad: Business tends to be busiest in the fall, when tourists flood nearby Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Moore said. He recently had to pass up a two-day job cleaning a koi fish pond, which would’ve brought in about \$1,000, his biggest job in months.

“Fall is the time to make money around here; it’s what gets us through the rest of the year,” said Moore, 36. “But of course it’s also right when the kids’ sickness kicks off. I’m really scared it’s going to screw us up financially.”

	<p>Back in Los Angeles, Terry, the freelancer who's been caring for his daughter, estimates he's lost at least two weeks' worth of work because of RSV-related child-care disruptions. He and his wife, who works two jobs as an aesthetician, have been eating into their savings to make ends meet.</p> <p>"It's been difficult for all of us," he said. "We thought things were finally going back to normal, but it's just one snowball after another."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Iran cracks down; protests still continue
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/15/world/middleeast/iran-protests-tehran-metro-shooting.html
GIST	<p>The Iranian authorities moved aggressively to disperse demonstrations in dozens of cities across the country on Tuesday, as an uprising demanding an end to clerical rule entered its third month, and neither protesters nor the government showed any signs of backing down.</p> <p>Security forces, adopting new tactics, flew drones and helicopters low over the crowds of protesters, sometimes opening fire on them, videos posted on social media showed.</p> <p>At a metro station in the capital, Tehran, security forces shot at people waiting for a train on a platform, setting off a rush as panicked commuters screamed and tried to dodge bullets, videos showed. Metro stations have been a common site for protests during the uprising.</p> <p>In Zanjan, a city in Iran's northwest, crowds tried to stop security forces from shoving protesters into a van. "Let him go!" they screamed. People were shot at as they ran for cover on the sidewalks, another video showed.</p> <p>The protests in Iran erupted in mid-September after the death of Mahsa Amini, 22, while she was in the custody of the morality police for allegedly violating the country's hijab law. Women and youth have been leading the protests, demanding social freedom and political change, and tapping into years of pent-up anger over the state's inability to reform.</p> <p>In major cities like Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan and Mashhad, crowds on Tuesday chanted slogans and shouted their anger, their words directed at the most powerful man in Iran: the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The aim: to remove Mr. Khamenei from power.</p> <p>Crowds have continued to gather in defiance of the authorities even as the government recently pledged harsh punishment for such dissent — including executions. Last week, 227 members of Parliament called on the judiciary to put protesters to death.</p> <p>The government has deployed violent tactics against and conducted raids on university campuses and high schools. Rights groups say that at least 300 people have been killed, including 50 minors, and the United Nation said 14,000 had been arrested. The government says at least 30 of its security forces have been killed.</p> <p>Activists in Iran have called for three days of nationwide protests and strikes from Tuesday to Thursday to commemorate "bloody November," a reference to the November 2019 antigovernment protests that followed a surge in fuel prices.</p> <p>During those protests three years ago, Iran unplugged the internet and opened fire on crowds from close range, killing at least 350 protesters, according to rights groups, who say the real numbers are likely much higher.</p> <p>Protesters now are starting to fight back against the government's crackdown.</p>

“We have a larger number of people activated and unity across ethnicity and class and gender and geographic location,” said Mani Mostofi, a human rights lawyer and director of [Miaan](#), a nonprofit organization. “Energy level is high. The resistance to the state is not going away anytime soon.”

[Videos](#) from Tuesday showed protesters throwing rocks at security forces and setting up road blockades. In the city of Arak, a group of protesters smashed the windows of a security van and set it on fire with Molotov cocktails.

In Shiraz, in a bold and new act of civil disobedience, a couple kissed while standing in the middle of traffic on a busy street, with the woman dressed in jeans and a sweater and not wearing a scarf, according to a [picture](#) that spread on social media.

Young people have also begun targeting clerics by running up to them and [tossing their turbans](#) from their heads and running away, videos on social media show. A young activist in Isfahan said their message to the government is that if women are not safe for their choice of attire, then neither are the clerics.

On Tuesday, men and women gathered on the streets across the country, [clapping and chanting](#), “Freedom, freedom, freedom.”

On Monday, the judiciary’s Revolution Court, which prosecutes political cases, handed down its first death sentence to an unidentified person, who was accused of setting fire to a government building, according to state media. On Tuesday another unidentified protester was sentenced to death for being an “enemy of God” and wielding a knife, the judiciary’s news outlet reported.

In Tehran, at least eight protesters have been charged with “corruption on earth” and being an “enemy of God,” which could potentially carry the death sentence.

Iran is also targeting three professional sectors critical to the uprising: journalists, doctors and lawyers.

The Committee to Protect Journalists said that 62 journalists had been arrested, including the reporters Niloofar Hamedei and Elaheh Mohammadi, who first brought to light Ms. Amini’s case. A joint statement by the Intelligence Ministry and the intelligence wing of Iran’s powerful Revolutionary Guards Corps accused the two journalists of receiving training from the C.I.A. to instigate unrest in Iran. Their respective newspapers have denied the allegations and said they were on assignment doing their jobs.

Saeed Dehghan, a prominent human rights lawyer in Tehran, said 15 lawyers had been arrested, with four released on bail and 11 currently in detention. One of Iran’s best known human rights lawyers, Mustafa Nili, was detained at Tehran’s domestic airport when he was traveling to the southeast city of Zahedan to offer pro bono legal service to detained protesters and the families of victims of a government massacre at a Friday prayer sermon in September.

“We are in a state of total legal collapse,” Mr. Dehghan said in an interview. “From top to bottom, they are arresting everyone and conducting sham trials.”

The physicians’ association of Iran said this week that it was pursuing the release of dozens of doctors arrested across the country. Doctors have been at the front line of the uprising because they treat the injured and sign death and medical certificates stating the cause of injury and death. The government has pressured them to lie on the certificates and to refuse treatment of injured protesters in emergency rooms — and to notify the authorities when protesters are brought to the hospital — lawyers, rights activists and two doctors in Tehran say.

The U.N. Human Rights Council will convene a special session on Iran on Nov. 24, a meeting requested by Germany and Iceland and supported by 44 countries. A resolution that will be put to vote and is expected to pass will establish a U.N. fact-finding mission to investigate Iran’s human rights violations.

	Mr. Mostofi, the rights lawyer, said that while international action against Iran could take time, the establishment of the U.N. investigative team would increase pressure on the country and “globalize the issue of Iran’s human rights abuses.”
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HEADLINE	11/16 China affirms ties to Russia but guarded
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/11/16/world/russia-ukraine-war-news-g20?action=click&pgtype=Article&module=&state=default&region=footer&context=breakout link back to briefing#china-affirms-ties-with-russia-but-signals-it-is-becoming-more-guarded-about-the-war
GIST	<p>While Western leaders shun Russia at the Group of 20 summit, China has affirmed that it wants to “deepen practical cooperation” with Moscow, despite President Vladimir V. Putin’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Even so, when the Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, held talks on Tuesday with his Russian counterpart, Sergey V. Lavrov, the official Chinese summary of Mr. Wang’s comments suggested that Beijing has become more guarded about the course of the war, even while it tries to maintain a partnership with Mr. Putin.</p> <p>Mr. Wang said that China welcomed recent Russian comments denying it might use nuclear weapons over Ukraine, despite recent discussions among senior Russian officials about how Moscow might use a tactical nuclear weapon in Ukraine, as The New York Times has reported.</p> <p>“China has noted that Russia recently reaffirmed its established position that nuclear war must not and cannot be fought, and this is a rational and responsible stance by Russia,” Mr. Wang said, according to the summary of the talks issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.</p> <p>The meeting appeared to have taken place before news spread that two Polish citizens had died in an explosion near Poland’s border with Ukraine. Mr. Lavrov has since departed the summit to return to Russia, Russian state media reported.</p> <p>Mr. Wang seemed to be referring to comments that Mr. Putin made in late October, when he denied that Moscow was preparing to use nuclear weapons in the war in Ukraine. “We have no need to do this,” Mr. Putin said. “There’s no sense for us, neither political nor military.”</p> <p>Mr. Putin’s denial stands against the assessments of senior American officials, who were alarmed by the Russian military leaders’ discussions over possibly using a tactical nuclear weapon in Ukraine. In a speech in late September, Mr. Putin made a cryptic reference to the atomic bombs that the United States dropped on Japan in 1945.</p> <p>Still, Mr. Wang appeared to want to encourage Russia to take steps that could ease international ill will that has spilled over to China. The Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, declared a “no limits” partnership with Moscow early this year, weeks before Mr. Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Mr. Wang said he welcomed Russia’s agreement this month to allow Ukrainian grain exports to resume through the Black Sea. President Biden said that during his summit with Mr. Xi on Monday, they had agreed to oppose Russia’s threat of using nuclear weapons in the Ukraine war.</p> <p>But even with Mr. Putin’s setbacks in Ukraine, China does not appear ready to walk away from Russia, which it sees as a vital strategic partner against the United States and its allies. Mr. Wang said that Beijing and Moscow should continue working together to “promote a more multipolar world.”</p> <p>“My own sense is that the strategic partnership is strong but that China has room to maneuver a bit within that context,” said Joseph Torqian, an assistant professor at the School of International Service at American University in Washington who studies Chinese and Russian politics. “Sometimes signaling closeness, sometimes signaling distance.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 NATO allies to gather; explosion alarm
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/11/16/world/russia-ukraine-war-news-g20?action=click&pgtype=Article&module=&state=default&region=footer&context=breakout link back to briefing#nato-envoys-will-gather-as-the-explosion-in-poland-alarms-the-alliance
GIST	<p>A day after a deadly explosion in Poland raised anxieties that Russia's war in Ukraine could spill into the territory of a NATO member, representatives of the alliance planned to meet on Wednesday morning in Brussels to discuss the blast.</p> <p>The explosion on Tuesday, in a farming village about four miles from the Ukrainian border, killed two people, according to Poland's government. The leaders of Ukraine, which is not in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, called the incident an intentional Russian strike on a NATO member. But the Kremlin denied involvement, and no evidence has emerged that the strike was intentional, or that Russia was responsible.</p> <p>The United States and its allies offered their "full support and assistance" for the Polish investigation into the blast.</p> <p>While the Polish Foreign Ministry said the missile was Russian-made, the country's president, Andrzej Duda, told reporters, "It was most likely a Russian-made missile, but this is all still under investigation at the moment." Both Ukraine and Russia use Soviet-era Russian made missiles.</p> <p>President Biden said on Wednesday that initial information about the missile's trajectory suggested that it was "unlikely" that it was fired from Russia. But it was unclear from the president's remarks whether he meant the missile had probably not been fired from inside Russia's territorial borders, or had probably not been fired by Russian forces in Ukraine or elsewhere.</p> <p>Mr. Biden spoke to reporters on the Indonesian island of Bali after attending an emergency meeting of leaders from NATO and the Group of 7 nations on the sidelines of a Group of 20 summit. That summit has been dominated by the war in Ukraine and its effects on the global economy, with Mr. Biden and allied leaders repeating on Tuesday their denunciations of Russia's invasion. Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin, skipped the summit.</p> <p>The explosion in Poland happened on a day when Russia unleashed one of its broadest barrages of aerial strikes against Ukraine since its invasion began in February, firing about 90 missiles at targets across the country, primarily electrical infrastructure.</p> <p>Russia's Defense Ministry insisted that it had not fired at targets near the Polish border. But Russian rocket strikes were reported in Ukraine's Volyn region, which lies across the border from Przewodow, the Polish village where the blast occurred.</p> <p>Military analysts noted that both the Russian and Ukrainian militaries could be using Russian-made missiles, leaving open a number of possible causes for the explosion. It could have involved a Russian missile that flew off course or was knocked off its trajectory by an intercepting Ukrainian air defense missile, or a missile fired by Ukraine to shoot down an incoming Russian strike.</p> <p>Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said that he believed "this has nothing to do with Russia." He told a news conference in Bali: "Maybe this is a technical mistake, or any other explanation will be found."</p> <p>The United Nations' secretary general, António Guterres, said he was "very concerned" by the explosion. "It is absolutely essential to avoid escalating the war in Ukraine," he said in a statement.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the war, the United States and its allies have sought to keep the fighting limited to Ukrainian territory and to avoid direct confrontation with Russia, even as NATO members have supplied a steady stream of weapons to Kyiv.</p>

	<p>But if the explosion is determined to have been a deliberate attack, it could have broad consequences. Article 5 of the NATO charter commits its members to mutual defense, stating that an attack on one is an attack on all. That could be taken as requiring a concerted response to the blast in Poland. President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, eager for more NATO support, said Tuesday that Russia had committed an “attack on collective security,” hinting at Article 5.</p> <p>Under Article 4 of the charter, any member country can request a formal consultation among all members on an issue of concern. A spokesman for the Polish government had said that it was considering invoking the provision.</p> <p>Late on Tuesday, the U.S. defense secretary, Lloyd J. Austin III, and the secretary of state, Antony J. Blinken, spoke with their Polish counterparts. Mr. Austin assured Poland’s defense minister “of the ironclad commitment of the United States to defend Poland,” according to a statement provided by the Pentagon.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Biden: missile unlikely fired from Russia
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/14/world/europe/biden-poland-missile-russia.html
GIST	<p>BALI, Indonesia — President Biden pledged support for a full investigation of the explosion that killed two people in Poland on Wednesday, but suggested to reporters that the missile that detonated probably had not been fired from Russia.</p> <p>It was unclear from the president’s remarks whether he meant the missile was not likely to have been fired from inside Russia’s territorial borders, or not likely to have been fired by Russian forces in Ukraine or elsewhere.</p> <p>Asked by a reporter whether the missile “was fired from Russia,” Mr. Biden replied, “There is preliminary information that contests that.”</p> <p>“I don’t want to say that until we completely investigate,” he said. But “the trajectory” of the missile made it unlikely “that it was fired from Russia,” he added.</p> <p>Mr. Biden and allies, including leaders from the wealthy Group of 7 nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, convened an emergency meeting to discuss the explosion on the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit on the Indonesian island of Bali. In brief remarks afterward, Mr. Biden said the leaders had agreed to support Poland’s investigation into the explosion.</p> <p>“I’m going to make sure we figure out exactly what happened,” Mr. Biden said. “And then we’re going to collectively figure out our next step and how to proceed.”</p> <p>The president went on to criticize Russia’s latest round of missile attacks on Ukraine, which disrupted power supplies for millions of Ukrainians on Tuesday in one of the broadest aerial attacks since Moscow’s forces invaded in February.</p> <p>“They’ve been totally unconscionable, what they’re doing. Totally unconscionable,” Mr. Biden said. “At the moment when the world came together at the G20 to urge de-escalation, Russia has chosen to escalate in Ukraine, while we’re meeting.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Report: China’s plan for war on Taiwan
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/nov/15/hill-panel-sees-china-already-preparing-for-war-on/
GIST	<p>China is increasing plans for military, economic and political warfare against Taiwan and the U.S. government needs to step up preparations and planning to respond to a future war across the Taiwan Strait, according to a report by a congressional China commission.</p>

The report from the bipartisan panel argues that China under President Xi Jinping this year has “adopted a significantly more aggressive stance toward Taiwan, ramping up displays of military force in addition to diplomatic and economic coercion.”

Beijing also is drawing lessons from Russia’s war in Ukraine, with an eye toward the forcible unification of Taiwan with the mainland.

“Russia’s war against Ukraine has galvanized the international community and heightened concerns over a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan,” states the annual report of the U.S.-China Economic Security Review Commission made public Tuesday.

The commission called on Congress to create an executive branch panel to prepare economic sanctions that can be imposed on China in response to military action against the democratic-ruled island state. The congressionally chartered panel also wants Congress to require the Pentagon to produce a classified report on the U.S. military forces needed to resist a Chinese attack on Taiwan.

Money will also matter. Congress should also authorize “significant additional multi-year defense funds” so the military is better prepared for a future China-Taiwan war, the 12-member commission of experts said.

Commission member Randy Schriver said the report details China’s growing capabilities and more aggressive activities toward Taiwan and the need for an expedited American response.

“While not addressing a specific timeline for a potential Chinese invasion attempt, the report certainly underscores the need for urgent action,” said Mr. Schriver, a former Pentagon and State Department China policymaker. “We therefore recommend ways to support [U.S. forces] through multi-year funding for the most applicable capabilities and expedited joint planning to optimize a potential U.S.-Taiwan response to [People’s Liberation Army] threats,” he said.

Despite the dire warnings, President Biden said this week after meeting with Mr. Xi that there are no signs China is preparing for an immediate attack on Taiwan. He appeared intent on lowering the friction in the U.S.-Chinese relationship.

Mr. Biden had vowed on four occasions that the United States would defend Taiwan with military force in the event of a Chinese attack. The White House later said the comments reflected long-standing U.S. policy toward Taiwan outlined in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act.

The administration’s Indo-Pacific strategy explicitly states that the United States will “defend our interests, deter military aggression against our own country and our allies and partners — including across the Taiwan Strait.”

U.S. military commanders and intelligence officials warned in recent congressional testimony and speeches that China is preparing for war against Taiwan — either a military invasion or naval blockade — by the end of the decade. Last month, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said China’s plans for taking over Taiwan are advancing on “a much faster timeline” than earlier projections.

Taiwan, formally known as the Republic of China, is an island nation located about 100 miles off the southeastern Chinese coast. It broke with the mainland in 1949 after Nationalist forces fled there during a civil war.

Mr. Xi has pledged that China will soon retake the island as part of his policy of national rejuvenation, and he does not rule out military action if necessary.

Preparing for war

The 630-page report includes new details of military preparations for what Beijing is calling the central element of national rejuvenation for the Chinese Communist Party. Chinese leaders, the commission said, are closely studying the Russia-Ukraine war for lessons that can apply to an assault on Taiwan.

The U.S. government is strengthening economic and security ties with Taiwan in an effort to bolster its defenses to discourage an attack. The Biden administration is also seeking to shape Taiwan's defenses with asymmetric warfare arms that would allow a weaker military to better confront a massively expanding People's Liberation Army.

China is also accelerating a multipronged campaign of coercion against Taiwan diplomatically, the report said. Beijing sharply increased its military and economic coercion after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August. She was the first sitting U.S. House speaker to visit the island in 25 years.

China responded with large-scale war games that encircled the island and missile firings over the island. Some of the missiles landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone. The report described the war games as "unprecedented in scale and proximity" to Taiwan, with combat drills that could be used in a blockade or invasion in six zones around the island.

"The PLA also continued to train its force for a wartime campaign against Taiwan, though U.S. officials assessed there were no indications of an imminent attack," the report said.

The August war games included the use of DF-15 short-range ballistic missiles, which are optimized for land targets rather than the use of anti-ship missiles in simulating attacks on ships. Another key indicator of a coming conflict outlined in the report involves strategic messaging by the Chinese Communist Party that was increasingly bellicose and uncompromising.

"Chinese officials' international messaging asserted China's ownership of the entire Taiwan Strait and conveyed their disdain for international norms," the report said.

The U.S. government rejected the statement and said the strait remains international waters.

Qin Gang, Chinese ambassador to the United States, told NPR in January that if Taiwan's government continues down a path of independence, "it most likely will involve China and the United States, the two big countries, in a military conflict."

The Biden administration is seeking to deter a Chinese attack through increased engagement that Mr. Biden announced this week. Key U.S. allies, including Australia, Japan, South Korea and Britain, have indicated that they would join a U.S. military defense of Taiwan.

Taiwan is also stepping up purchases of U.S. defensive arms, boosting defense spending and civil defenses, and working to curb Taiwanese business investment on the mainland.

Other signs of concern are recent statements by Chinese officials that hardened Beijing's posture toward a peaceful unification, the report said.

A Chinese government white paper made public in August said Beijing's plan for unification under the "one country, two systems" no longer includes offers of government autonomy, the report said.

"The omission of the promise not to dispatch mainland troops leaves open the possibility that the PLA might occupy Taiwan for an extended period of time as Beijing roots out those it deems separatists who cannot be brought into the fold of a unified society," the report said.

Frequent intimidating PLA operations around Taiwan increased sharply after the Pelosi visit with 1,286 warplane flights near the island from January to Oct. 6, the report said. The largest number, 339 flights, took place in early August.

	<p>Taipei is seeking to enhance military readiness by shifting to an all-volunteer force. However, the Taiwan military readiness problems include a 60% shortage in front-line, active-duty troops.</p> <p>Taiwan is sharply increasing defense spending with supplements of \$8.6 billion to buy precision missiles, drones, missile corvettes and naval weapons for coastal patrol boats.</p> <p>The State Department approved \$1.5 billion in arms sales to Taiwan after an estimated \$16 billion in previous years.</p> <p>The report warned that many of the weapons purchased or sought by Taipei were delayed. Stinger anti-aircraft missiles and other weapons have been sent to Ukraine.</p> <p>“The diversion of existing stocks of weapons and munitions to Ukraine and pandemic-related supply chain issues has exacerbated a sizable backlog in the delivery of weapons already approved for sale to Taiwan, undermining the island’s readiness,” the report said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Day 266 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/16/russia-ukraine-war-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-266-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A “Russian-made missile” fell on the Polish village of Przewodów, near the Ukrainian border, killing two people on Tuesday afternoon, Poland’s foreign ministry said in a statement. The incident is the first time that the territory of a Nato country has been struck during the near-nine-month Ukraine war. • The US president, Joe Biden, has said the missile was unlikely to have been fired from Russia due to its trajectory. The US president was speaking at the G20 meeting in Bali, Indonesia, after convening an emergency meeting of western leaders to discuss the explosion on Nato territory that has the potential to take the war in Ukraine into a new even more dangerous dimension. • The Associated Press news agency has reported that initial findings suggest the missile was fired by Ukrainian forces at an incoming Russian missile, citing US officials. • Poland’s president, Andrzej Duda, said that the explosion was a “one-off incident” and there were “no indications” it was going to happen again. Duda said it was “most likely” a Russian-made rocket but “we do not have any conclusive evidence at the moment as to who launched this missile ... this is all still under investigation at the moment.” • Poland’s government said it had summoned Moscow’s ambassador to Poland to provide an explanation. According to a statement released on Poland’s government’s website, a spokesperson said: “The minister of foreign affairs, Zbigniew Rau summoned the ambassador of the Russian federation to the ministry of foreign affairs and demanded immediate detailed explanations.” • Russia has denied its missiles crossed into Poland, calling the reports a “deliberate provocation”. A statement from the Russian defence ministry read: “The statements of the Polish media and officials about the alleged fall of ‘Russian’ missiles in the area of Przewodów is a deliberate provocation in order to escalate the situation. No strikes on targets near the Ukrainian-Polish state border were made by Russian rockets.” • Nato ministers are preparing to gather on Wednesday at the request of the Polish government. The meeting is set to be convened under article 4 of the Nato treaty, which allows for all Nato allies to be brought together when the “territorial integrity, political independence or security” of any member has been threatened. • A deliberate attack on a Nato member could in theory lead to the invocation of the alliance’s article 5, which states that an attack on one member of the military alliance is considered an attack against all. But the Nato treaty is highly unlikely to be triggered by an accidental attack. • Biden offered Duda “full support for and assistance with Poland’s investigation”. Biden also “reaffirmed the US’s ironclad commitment to Nato” during a telephone call on Wednesday.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duda has also spoken to the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who tweeted afterwards: “We exchanged available information and are clarifying all the facts ... all of Europe and the world must be fully protected from terrorist Russia.” • The Russian defence ministry in a statement denied its missiles crossed into Poland, calling the reports a “deliberate provocation”. “The statements of the Polish media and officials about the alleged fall of ‘Russian’ missiles in the area of Przewodów is a deliberate provocation in order to escalate the situation. No strikes on targets near the Ukrainian-Polish state border were made by Russian rockets.” • Some analysts said they believed photographs of missile debris at the scene showed a Ukrainian S-300 air defence system that would have been engaged in shooting down a Russian missile, but it was not possible to corroborate those reports. • Russia launched waves of missile strikes across Ukraine on Wednesday as G20 leaders met in Bali. Ukraine’s authorities said it was another planned attack aimed at the country’s energy infrastructure facilities. In his Wednesday evening address, Zelenskiy said “a total of 90 missiles” hit Ukraine. Seven million homes were left without power. The deputy head of the presidential administration, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, wrote on Telegram that the energy situation across Ukraine was “critical” as a result.
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HEADLINE	11/15 Europe faces ‘cancer epidemic’
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/nov/15/europe-faces-cancer-epidemic-after-estimated-1m-cases-missed-during-covid
GIST	<p>Experts have warned that Europe faces a “cancer epidemic” unless urgent action is taken to boost treatment and research, after an estimated 1m diagnoses were missed during the pandemic.</p> <p>The impact of Covid-19 and the focus on it has exposed “weaknesses” in cancer health systems and in the cancer research landscape across the continent, which, if not addressed as a matter of urgency, will set back cancer outcomes by almost a decade, leading healthcare and scientific experts say.</p> <p>A report, European Groundshot – Addressing Europe’s Cancer Research Challenges: a Lancet Oncology Commission, brought together a wide range of patient, scientific, and healthcare experts with detailed knowledge of cancer across Europe.</p> <p>One unintended consequence of the pandemic was the adverse effects that the rapid repurposing of health services and national lockdowns, and their continuing legacy, have had on cancer services, on cancer research, and on patients with cancer, the experts said.</p> <p>“To emphasise the scale of this problem, we estimate that about 1m cancer diagnoses might have been missed across Europe during the Covid-19 pandemic,” they wrote in The Lancet Oncology. “There is emerging evidence that a higher proportion of patients are diagnosed with later cancer stages compared with pre-pandemic rates as a result of substantial delays in cancer diagnosis and treatment. This cancer stage shift will continue to stress European cancer systems for years to come.</p> <p>“These issues will ultimately compromise survival and contribute to inferior quality of life for many European patients with cancer.”</p> <p>The report analysed data and found clinicians saw 1.5 million fewer patients with cancer in the first year of the pandemic, with one in two patients with cancer not receiving surgery or chemotherapy in a timely manner. About 100m screenings were missed, and it is estimated that as many as 1 million European citizens may have an undiagnosed cancer as a result of the backlog.</p> <p>“We estimate that approximately 1m cancer diagnoses were missed across Europe during the Covid-19 pandemic,” said Prof Mark Lawler, of Queen’s University Belfast, the chair and lead author of the commission. “We are in a race against time to find those missing cancers.</p>

	<p>“Additionally, we saw a chilling effect on cancer research, with laboratories shut down and clinical trials delayed or cancelled in the first pandemic wave. We are concerned that Europe is heading towards a cancer epidemic in the next decade if cancer health systems and cancer research are not urgently prioritised.”</p> <p>The Russia invasion of Ukraine represents another huge challenge to cancer research in Europe, the report says. Russia and Ukraine are two of the largest contributors to clinical cancer research in the world. The commission also predicts Brexit will negatively impact European cancer research.</p> <p>“With the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is more important than ever that Europe develops a resilient cancer research landscape to play a transformative role in improving prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and quality of life for current and future patients and those living beyond cancer,” said Lawler.</p> <p>The report also argues that cancer prevention efforts and research, in particular, have not had the funding they deserve. A greater focus on preventing cancer would reduce the number of people who develop cancer and therefore allow more resources to be available for those who do require treatment, it says.</p> <p>“It is estimated that 40% of cancers in Europe could be prevented if primary prevention strategies made better use of our current understanding of cancer risk factors,” said Anna Schmütz, of the International Agency for Research on Cancer.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 China circles El Salvador's economy
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/nov/15/china-el-salvador-economy-cryptocurrency-fall
GIST	<p>As crypto-Twitter cascaded with apocalyptic memes about the bankruptcy of cryptocurrency exchange FTX and the sharp drop in the bitcoin price, one account has remained notably silent on the topic.</p> <p>Unlike in previous crashes, the president of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, who made bitcoin legal tender a year ago, did not exhort his followers to “buy the dip”. The laser eyes, popular among crypto currency traders, have long since been removed from his Twitter profile.</p> <p>On the day that FTX declared insolvency, he announced that the country would sign a free trade agreement with China. His vice-president, Félix Ulloa, said that China had offered to buy the country's \$21bn in foreign debt as part of the deal.</p> <p>The Central American country of 6.5 million finds itself in a tough financial position. In January it must pay €667m (\$688m) for a Eurobond amortization. At the beginning of the year Bukele promised that his country would issue bitcoin-denominated bonds to pay off national debt and forecast that the price of bitcoin would reach \$100,000.</p> <p>But the so-called “volcano bonds” never emerged and today the bitcoin price hovers around \$16,000. The best tracker of the president's opaque trading estimate that he has spent over \$107m on 2,381 bitcoin. Today that investment is worth a little over \$40m.</p> <p>“If Bukele dreamed that he could create a different and innovative political economy, against the advice of the IMF, that dream has failed,” said Luis Membrano, a Salvadoran economist. “There are no easy alternatives, no short-cuts.”</p> <p>The bitcoin losses are relatively insignificant to the overall debt, but the president's determination to mock advice from the IMF to backtrack on his bitcoin policy has spooked international markets. When the ratings agency Moody's announced a January downgrade in the country's credit, Bukele tweeted: “Breaking: El Salvador DGAF”, an acronym of “don't give a fuck”. Now Fitch says that some form of default is likely in January.</p>

With inflation rising, a recession looming and the fiscal situation worsening, El Salvador cannot turn on the printing press because the country adopted the US dollar as national currency in 2001. Instead the government has dipped into its reserves to cover its fiscal hole. If the situation deteriorates, the country could eventually be forced to move off the dollar, according to Membreño.

However, to accept debt financing from China would signify a definitive break from the US and move the country closer China, Russia and Turkey, according to Membreño. “It would represent a total realignment of El Salvadoran foreign policy,” he said.

That financing wouldn’t come cheap, according to Evan Ellis, a senior associate at the Washington DC based Centre for Strategic & International Studies. “China acts as a payday lender, they make good money off of these deals,” he said. “But they often find a way to tie the loans to long-term commercial and strategic benefits opening the way for Chinese companies.”

Since [El Salvador ended its relationship with Taiwan in 2018](#), China has agreed to build a stadium and a library in the country but its plans to convert the port of La Unión into a logistics hub have stalled.

Closer ties to China could also suit Bukele’s own ambition. He has attracted criticism from the US and Europe for seeking re-election in 2024 in contravention of the country’s constitution.

“When populist governments, of the left or right, come to power, China acts as a non-judgmental underwriter,” said Ellis. “China can give Bukele financial independence to be authoritarian and ride roughshod over the constitution.”

With an approval rating around 90%, Bukele remains the most popular president in Latin America, based on a [heavy-handed approach to law and order](#) and regular attacks on the old political elite.

When Salvadorans elected him in 2019, following decades of corruption from the traditional parties and spiraling gang crime, many felt they were in the last-chance saloon.

But as a bitcoin gambler, Bukele has known neither when to hold them nor when to fold them. Closer ties to China would represent yet another roll of the dice.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Chaos: Covid curbs fuel Chinese unrest
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/15/covid-curbs-fuel-unrest-in-southern-chinese-city-video-shows
GIST	<p>Crowds in the southern Chinese metropolis of Guangzhou have crashed through lockdown barriers and marched on to streets in a rare outburst of public anger about Covid restrictions days after the Chinese government announced that it was easing them.</p> <p>According to videos widely shared on Twitter, hundreds cheered as they charged through the streets in Haizhu district in chaotic scenes in southwestern Guangzhou on Monday night. In one piece of footage, protesters overturned a police car.</p> <p>Local police declined to comment when contacted by the Guardian. “I cannot answer your question,” a staff member at the Datang police station in Haizhu district said on Tuesday.</p> <p>Guangzhou, home to nearly 19 million people, has been the centre of Covid outbreaks in China, with the number of cases surging in recent days. Daily infections of Covid-19 in the city have topped 5,000 for the first time, leading to speculation that localised lockdowns could widen.</p> <p>Tensions had been mounting in Haizhu district – home to dozens of wholesale textile markets and thousands of small businesses that employ tens of thousands of migrant workers from elsewhere in China</p>

– after the authorities placed it under lockdown this month. The restrictions came as workers scrambled to meet production goals to guarantee supplies for an online shopping festival on 11 November.

Before public anger boiled over on Monday night, residents and business owners had been skirting government curbs by venturing outside their locked down districts and smuggling their goods out, according to an official at the Guangzhou health commission early this month, who denounced the illegal activities.

Radio Free Asia reported that disgruntled workers also protested in several nearby industrial hubs, including Kangle, also in Haizhu district, and Tangxia, in Tianhe district.

A number of posts on China’s social media platform Weibo blamed the protesters, who were mainly migrant workers from Hubei province, for the “rioting”, but one user noted that the arbitrary lockdowns of residences and the barring of migrant workers from returning home in the protracted Covid restrictions over almost three years were “driving people mad” and said some workers had killed themselves.

Last month, a Covid outbreak at a Foxconn factory that makes Apple iPhones in Zhengzhou, central China, prompted a large number of workers to flee and slowed iPhone production.

On Tuesday, China reported 17,772 new local Covid-19 infections for 14 November, up from 16,072 a day earlier and the most since April. The Guangzhou health commission reported 5,124 Covid-19 cases as of Monday, of which 4,977 were asymptomatic. Officials also said on Tuesday that they plan more temporary hospitals in addition to the six that have been built that have 20,000 beds, mainly for observation of infected people without symptoms.

The chaos in Guangzhou was the latest outburst of frustration over restrictions that have involved frequent lockdowns and enforced quarantines under China’s “dynamic zero Covid” policy, which the authorities say has saved lives. Many cities have scaled back routine testing after the government announced measures last Friday to lift some of the rules to alleviate economic pressures and cool public discontent.

The Guangzhou health commission said in a news conference on Monday that the authorities were ending lockdowns in many districts as cases were being brought under control. A spokesperson said public transport, industrial production and ordinary life in many districts in Guangzhou, including Haizhu, were resuming. However, she also said the infection was still continuing and a number of districts, including Haizhu, would continue to strengthen pandemic control measures.

The Communist party’s mouthpiece People’s Daily on Tuesday reiterated that the “dynamic zero Covid” policy was to be “unswervingly implemented”, saying the “enhancement” announced last Friday was to fine-tune measures to fight against the pandemic, and not an indication of relaxation.

Under the new rules, testing efforts are to be more targeted, easing a financial burden on cities. On Monday, Beijing’s most populous district of Chaoyang moved some testing sites closer to residential compounds. While that increased the number of sites, it also led to long waiting times for many, fuelling frustration as many workplaces require negative test results within 24 hours.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Opposition to airport expansions grows
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/fierce-opposition-mega-airports-continues-grow-4-mostly-rural-counties/l2BGMZKBLVA33PELFDO2352ZDI/
GIST	OLYMPIA — There’s fierce opposition to the state’s plan to build or expand airports in at least four communities along the Interstate 5 corridor. There are “Stop the airport” groups in King, Pierce and Thurston counties.

That's where the state is considering expanding existing airports or putting in a brand-new airport to ease pressure off the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in SeaTac.

One group, Stop Olympia Airport Growth, is meeting in Olympia on Tuesday night to oppose expansion of the capital city's regional airport. They are meeting to discuss issues regarding noise pollution, habitat destruction and health impacts they say an expanded airport will bring — and they are far from alone.

When composer and singer Dawn Sonntag moved to the rustic Sunwood Lakes neighborhood in Thurston County three years ago, she thought she had found the perfect place for her work and her family.

"We instantly knew that this was where we wanted to live," said Sonntag.

But last summer, the state's Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission, or CACC, released four potential sites for a second international airport in Western Washington.

It includes Sonntag's neighborhood of about 400 homes and two lakes.

"According to the map that is on the CACC website, we are almost in the center of the circle," she said. Hers isn't the only neighborhood under consideration for a new, full-scale airport.

CACC posted a map showing that distinction belongs to two sites in Pierce County: one near Graham, the other near Eatonville, as well as one King County site near Enumclaw. There is fierce opposition to each of them.

A state Department of Transportation aviation official told KIRO 7 the need is great for a large, international airport in addition to Seattle-Tacoma.

"Heavy congestion at the airport, getting to the airport," said Robert Hodgman. "Prices will go sky high, the availability of seats will drop. I mean basically, that means 27 million people who won't be able to get on a flight."

Sonntag says that is not reason enough to change the lives of so many who already live here.

"We stand in complete solidarity, especially with Pierce County," she said. "Those are beautiful rural areas that should not be destroyed by a mega-airport."

Sonntag says they have been told the commission will hold a public hearing on all of this in February. They are taking comments now.

A decision could be made in June, so stay tuned.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Homebuyers in Seattle face high mortgages
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-real-estate-housing-market-income-required-mortgage-redfin-report-salary-median-inflation-national-average#
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Homebuyers in Seattle need to earn nearly double the average American's annual income to afford a home.</p> <p>According to a new report from Redfin, the "annual income required to afford a median-price home" in October was \$205,312 in the Emerald City. Nationally, the average income required is \$107,281 — up 46% from a year ago — to afford a \$2,682 monthly mortgage payment due to mortgage rates nearly doubling and inflation, Redfin said.</p> <p>The monthly mortgage payment on a "typical home" in Seattle as of October was \$5,133 a month, a sharp increase from \$3,525 in October 2021, according to the Seattle-based real estate brokerage.</p>

	<p>Seattle's median sales price in October 2022 was \$763,000, Redfin's report said.</p> <p>The income required to purchase a home in San Francisco (\$402,821 for a \$10,071 monthly mortgage payment) and San Jose (\$363,265, \$9,082) are the highest in the country, according to the report.</p> <p>"The income required to buy a home then skyrocketed in 2022 as mortgage rates rose at their fastest pace in history, reaching 7% by the end of October (though rates posted their biggest single-day decline on record on Thursday upon news that inflation cooled)," Redfin's report said. "Home prices also continued to increase for much of the year, though they've now started declining from their peak and year-over-year growth has now slowed to around 3%."</p> <p>"High rates are making buyers rethink their priorities, as many of them can no longer afford the home they want in the location they want," Washington, DC Redfin agent Chelsea Traylor said in a press release. "If you had a \$900,000 budget a few months ago, rising rates mean it's now around \$700,000—and sellers aren't dropping their prices enough to make up for the change. So buyers are searching further away from the city in more affordable areas or waiting for prices and/or rates to come down before making a move."</p>
Return to Top	Click here for the full Redfin report.

HEADLINE	11/15 Union: TPD chief 'falling crime' misleading
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/tacoma-police-union-president-calls-chiefs-crime-presentation-misleading
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. - The Tacoma Police Union sent a letter to the city council and police chief, claiming the most recent crime data presentation was misleading and far from the truth.</p> <p>On Nov. 1, Tacoma Police Chief Avery Moore presented data to city council which paints a hopeful picture for the future of the city.</p> <p>This year, Tacoma has seen the most homicides on record.</p> <p>Over the last three months, the police department has placed an emphasis on 16 high-crime areas.</p> <p>During the presentation to council, Chief Moore said violent crime—murder, robbery, aggravated assault—is down 37% in those areas.</p> <p>However, the Tacoma Police Union president says this information is misleading to the people who live in the city.</p> <p>"That is just not what the community is feeling," said Henry Betts, the president of The Tacoma Police Union IUPA Local 6. "If you say violent crime and homicides are down, but you have a record-breaking [year] for homicides being the most ever since we've been tracking it. Those two things can't be true at the same time."</p> <p>Betts also says the discussion regarding response times was misleading.</p> <p>During the presentation, Chief Moore stated the emphasis on the 16 high-crime areas did not affect priority calls for service.</p> <p>Betts says priority calls make up a small percentage of calls for service. He says the majority of 911 callers are waiting far too long for responding officers.</p> <p>"Those response times are really not acceptable. And the community is seeing that. We're late to get to a lot of these other basic calls, but they are still calls that are a big deal to the victim of it," he said.</p> <p>According to police, incidents that had multiple offenses—like a robbery and murder—were only counted as one incident.</p>

Betts also says he has concerns how shootings, where there is no target or injury, are not counted in the analysis.

FOX 13 News reached out to Tacoma Police to see if Chief Moore was available to comment on this letter, but he has not responded.

Police union letter to Tacoma City Council, Police Chief Moore

The union's full letter reads as follows:

"Tacoma Police Department leadership recently presented to the City Council an update on violent crime in the City of Tacoma. That update was widely covered by the local media. The Officers, Detectives, and Sergeants represented by the Tacoma Police Union Local 6 interact daily with the community that is experiencing unprecedented crime in our City. For us, the real message was lost in TPD's presentation. TPD's artificially narrow focus on statistical improvements in crime rates in specific locations misleads the public into believing crime is down citywide. That is far from the truth.

"The truth is that our City continues to be victimized by crime at unacceptable rates. The truth is that we have suffered another record year for homicides, with seven weeks still left to go in the year. The truth is that many business owners continue to eat the financial losses from being property crime victims. The truth is the community, and particularly our most vulnerable neighborhoods, are still experiencing entirely too many shootings, aggravated assaults, drive-by shootings, shots fired, or whatever phrase we wish to use to describe bullets being indiscriminately fired throughout our City. The truth is that when officers report to work, they commonly face 50 or more pending 911 calls and this crushing demand for police services leads to the inevitable truth of delayed response times.

"TPD leadership should not hide from the truth. TPD leadership should be completely transparent and comprehensive in its answers to the Council's and community's questions about crime. The truth is often an uncomfortable reality. Hiding behind selective statistics does not change the experience of our community—an experience that is unacceptably riddled with crime. Two examples bear noting.

"First, there was more to the story when Chief Moore answered Councilmember Olgy Diaz's question regarding response times by indicating that priority call response has not changed.

"In reality, Chief Moore's answer was narrowly focused only on Priority 1 calls, which are less than 2% of TPD's 2022 call response. That left 98% of Councilmember Diaz's question unanswered. The complete answer is that TPD officers prioritize the highest acuity calls for service—the Priority 1 calls—and continue to drop everything else to address those calls as quickly as they can. But for the other 98% of calls, TPD continues to struggle with timely responses; the call load is simply too much for our current TPD staffing levels, resulting in delayed responses to the community's requests for police assistance.

"Second, Local 6 wholeheartedly agrees with Councilmember Kiara Daniels when she correctly identified that it is a big deal to the community when an unoccupied home is struck by gunfire. Her comments came in response to the parlor trick by TPD leadership to reclassify shooting incidents to "vandalisms" under certain criteria. It is wildly misleading for TPD to simply rename a problem with the hope that it disappears by getting lost in the statistical mix. Renaming and reclassifying when bullets fly indiscriminately into a home does not change the fact that our community was shot up. Our community does not want us to play games by renaming a problem; our community wants us to fix the problem.

"We acknowledge the importance of TPD having a crime plan. Indeed, Local 6's members have gone above-and-beyond in implementing Chief Moore's crime plan, and we will continue to do so. But our solutions must be based in honest dialogue about the scope of the problem, the viability of crime plans and solutions, and the current status of the implementation of those plans and solutions. For instance, we must be honest that TPD's crime plan is not the only answer. The solution also requires an open and willing jail partner, proper police staffing, support from City Hall, and legislative fixes to ensure that crime victims are prioritized ahead of criminals.

"Our community demands transparency and accountability in all that TPD does. TPD must be open and transparent about the status, results, and limits of its crime plan. Whether by responding to calls for service or by participating in solutions-oriented discussions, Local 6's members will continue to be part of the solution. We all have the same goal: to make Tacoma a safer City."

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HEADLINE	11/16 Parade of tankers ease Europe energy crisis
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/business/europe-energy-natural-gas.html
GIST	<p>The lights in Europe are being kept on by giant ships sailing from ports in Louisiana and Texas.</p> <p>The ships are loaded with natural gas, chilled to a liquid. Europe used to be a fickle customer for liquefied natural gas, preferring to rely on often cheaper pipeline gas from Russia, Norway and North Africa. L.N.G. used to go primarily to Asian countries willing to pay more, like China, Japan and South Korea.</p> <p>All of that has changed over the last year. Europe, responding to cutoffs of natural gas by Russia and trying to fill storage facilities to ward off winter cold, has been willing to pay almost any price to outbid other buyers.</p> <p>“At the moment we cannot do without L.N.G.,” said Augustin Prate, vice president for energy and commodities at Kayrros, a Paris-based research firm.</p> <p>The upending of the natural gas market in Europe has been head-spinning, and it isn’t over. Europe’s gas storage facilities, which gorged on L.N.G. all spring and summer, are full; they can barely take any more. The price of a shipload of L.N.G., which might have sold for \$20 million two years ago, soared to perhaps \$200 million last summer, and is now about half that, with winter fast approaching.</p> <p>Now, around 40 tankers with chilled gas worth billions have been sitting off the coasts of Europe and Asia, anticipating that if they wait until the weather turns colder before unloading their fuel, they will be paid higher prices.</p> <p>The year’s tumult has been very profitable for some and costly for many. Consumers and businesses in many countries are paying for this haul of L.N.G. through higher utility bills that have forced some companies to shut down temporarily and prompted street protests. Governments trying to soften the blow through subsidies or nationalization of energy companies have soaring debt levels.</p> <p>The largest tankers hold enough gas to heat a small city of 70,000 homes for a year, according to an industry estimate, and the parade of L.N.G. tankers heading to Europe has increased more than 50 percent over last year, compensating for Russia’s cutoffs. The bulk of that increased traffic has come from the United States, which because of shale drilling has grown to be one of the top global exporters of chilled gas, along with Qatar and Australia.</p> <p>“U.S. L.N.G. has become a foundation for European energy security,” said Daniel Yergin, an energy historian.</p> <p>In the days when Russia supplied up to 40 percent of Europe’s gas, the continent was considered a dumping ground for L.N.G., where shippers would send a tanker if demand elsewhere, especially Asia, was weak. This year, Europe has become a destination for more shippers. American L.N.G. suppliers tend to have more flexible contracts than those in other countries, and so are able to go where the gas is most wanted.</p> <p>After Russia invaded Ukraine, Europe quickly shifted from what the industry called “the market of last resort” to “the market of most need,” said Anatol Feygin, executive vice president and chief commercial officer of Cheniere Energy, a large American L.N.G. supplier.</p>

This year, shipments to Europe from the United States have more than doubled, according to Kayrros. Cargoes from Qatar have increased about 20 percent. Russia, which continues to send L.N.G. to Europe despite throttling back pipeline gas, has raised its exports about 10 percent. Although shipments to Asia have declined around 9 percent this year, it remains the main destination for the fuel.

Mr. Feygin said about 70 percent of the cargoes loaded at Cheniere this year had gone to Europe, including the roughly 10 percent that the company reserves for its own energy trading business. In August, for instance, he dispatched a cargo of gas aboard the Gaslog Georgetown from Cheniere's terminal at Sabine Pass, in western Louisiana, to a newly opened terminal at Eemshaven in the northern Netherlands that the Dutch authorities set up hastily after Russia's push into Ukraine.

Mr. Feygin sold the cargo to CEZ — a big Czech energy company, making its first purchase of L.N.G.

In a statement, CEZ said the cargo from Cheniere and other expected shipments were "a significant step for the Czech Republic's energy security." Russia has cut gas supplies to CEZ to a "minimal level," according to Roman Gazdik, a spokesman for CEZ.

In all likelihood, that security comes at a high price. Cheniere and CEZ declined to comment on financial terms, but the cargo probably sold near spot or current prices, analysts say. Clementine Laure, an analyst at Kayrros, estimated that the cargo would currently be worth \$105 million.

With overall supplies growing only about 5 percent this year, Europe's expansive appetite for L.N.G. is most likely driving up prices around the world and making it unaffordable for many poorer countries.

Buying and selling L.N.G. remains a clubby, secretive business. Pricing benchmarks, especially in Europe, are less firmly established than standards like Brent crude in oil trading.

Still, big money has clearly been made in recent months. Some of the profits stem from the fact that many of the companies shipping a cargo from the United States will have bought their fuel based on gas prices there, which are now about a fifth of European gas prices, said Ciaran Roe, global director for L.N.G. at S&P Global, a financial services firm.

U.S. natural gas is often cheaper than in Europe for a variety of reasons, including abundant domestic production. After costs for processing and transporting are added, the gas suppliers are still likely to be earning very high profits, he said.

This is a boom time for the biggest players in L.N.G. These are mostly large energy companies with the financial firepower to invest in the multibillion-dollar cost of building liquefaction facilities (the gas must be cooled to minus 260 degrees Fahrenheit to turn it to liquid) and receiving terminals as well as to finance the current high costs of buying and trading cargoes.

The Western company with the largest L.N.G. portfolio last year was Shell, while TotalEnergies, Cheniere and Exxon Mobil were all major forces, according to a presentation by Shell. During the first nine months of this year, Shell's Integrated Gas business, which includes L.N.G., earned \$10.1 billion, double the profit of the same period in 2021.

In a sense, markets have been working almost too well. European countries like Germany have overachieved in their goals of filling gas storage facilities to near capacity. With warm weather and high prices reducing demand for gas, full tanks at L.N.G. receiving terminals have meant there is no place to put more.

In mid-October, Enagas, the gas grid operator in Spain, the European country with the largest capacity to receive L.N.G., warned of what it called a "mismatch" of supply and demand that could lead to halts in receiving new supplies.

“The gas system in Europe is full,” Arturo Gonzalo Aizpiri, the company’s chief executive, said in an interview. He added that although the overload was symptomatic of bottlenecks in the system, it was also “a reason for a certain optimism indicating that Europe is facing better conditions for the winter from a security of supply standpoint.”

Recent trends in the gas markets also offer cause for optimism. After months of astronomical prices, European benchmark gas futures have eased by about two-thirds in recent weeks, though they remain elevated by historical standards. The price of L.N.G. heading for northwest Europe, which has often closely tracked the Dutch TTF, a European benchmark for natural gas, has lately moved to a substantial discount, according to market participants. Recently, S&P Global’s assessment of L.N.G. in northwest Europe was about \$13 per million British thermal units, a gas metric, compared with about \$33 per million British thermal units for the benchmark.

Pressure on prices is most likely coming from lower-than-expected demand, full storage and the fact that terminals for receiving the gas are still under construction in some countries, including Germany.

Mr. Roe said Russia’s near-departure from the European market also meant that natural gas prices in Europe were being influenced by a set of factors other than L.N.G.

He suggested that today’s price relationships might also eventually “flip on their heads,” noting that in 2020 L.N.G. prices dipped so low that it was not worth loading cargoes in the United States, and companies canceled orders, accepting multimillion-dollar penalties.

“We are seeing the all-time boom in gas prices,” he said. “And we all know what often follows the all-time boom in something.”

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HEADLINE	11/16 Inflation in Britain surges over 11%
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/16/business/uk-inflation-october.html
GIST	<p>Britain’s cost-of-living crisis deepened in October, as consumer prices surged 11.1 percent from a year earlier, the highest in more than 40 years, granting no relief to households struggling to keep up with large increases in the price of food, heating and gas.</p> <p>The increase, which was higher than expected, came after the annual inflation rate had reached 10.1 percent in September. On a month-to-month basis, the Consumer Prices Index rose 2 percent from September to October.</p> <p>Despite a government support plan designed to shield households and businesses from the scourge of skyrocketing energy bills, gas and electricity prices were the biggest driver behind the sharp run-up in consumer prices, the Office for National Statistics said. The price of food also marched higher, for the 15th straight month, as supermarkets continued to pass on increases in production costs.</p> <p>“Staggeringly, consumer prices jumped up by 2 percent in one month, which is equivalent to the Bank of England’s target for the rise in prices over the course of a whole year,” Jake Finney, an economist at PwC, said in a note.</p> <p>Britain’s inflation rate again surpassed that of the eurozone, fueling the worst cost-of-living crisis in four decades. It comes as households and businesses grapple with the prospect of a drawn-out recession. The British economy shrank 0.2 percent between July and September compared with the previous three months, and central bankers have warned of a “prolonged” downturn lasting up to two years.</p> <p>Continued cost increases are of particular concern to businesses, including thousands of small companies that make up the backbone of the British economy. “Far from peaking, inflation continues to rise,” the British Chambers of Commerce said in a statement. “We speak to thousands of businesses who tell us this is unsustainable.”</p>

A broader recession is expected to spread to the continent by the end of the year, with countries from France to Finland facing a double blow of rising inflation and slowing or declining growth. Russia's war in Ukraine, and retaliatory sanctions against Russia by European countries, have caused global fuel, food and fertilizer prices to soar.

Wages in Britain [increased 5.7 percent](#) in the third quarter, their fastest pace in 20 years, as people re-entered the work force following the end of Britain's pandemic lockdowns. But inflation is rising so fast that it is outstripping those gains, leaving households struggling to keep up.

And some of the employment gains mask an underlying precariousness, with many people re-entering the labor market as [self-employed](#) workers. When adjusted for rising prices, wages overall fell by 2.7 percent in September.

To bring inflation down, the Bank of England is trying to curb economic growth with a series of interest rate increases. Earlier this month the central bank raised interest rates by three-quarters of a point to 3 percent, the highest since 2008. Analysts at ING said the bank was likely to raise rates by another half point in December.

But the moves have put further financial pressure on homeowners already worried about rising costs, because they keep mortgage rates high and will have the effect of cooling an economy that is already slowing down. The cost of housing and household services jumped by over 26 percent in October from a year ago.

Inflation should start to come down slowly starting next year as energy costs peak, Pantheon Macroeconomics, a research firm, said in a note to clients. But overall living and business costs will remain "extremely dependent on the government's approach to subsidizing energy prices," the firm said.

Britain's economy is also suffering from a series of self-inflicted wounds by the governing Conservative Party. The prime minister, [Rishi Sunak](#), has made it clear that he intends to take a tougher approach to public finances after a period of turmoil under the preceding leader, Liz Truss, who pushed economic policies during a short-lived tenure that threw Britain into financial turmoil.

On Thursday, Mr. Sunak and the chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, are expected to announce tax increases and spending cuts alongside a plan to cut Britain's debt.

The statement is expected to detail spending and tax policies in line with lowering Britain's debt burden. It will be accompanied by forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility, an independent government watchdog that will assess the impact of the government's policies on the economy and public finances.

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HEADLINE	11/15 King Co. council passes \$16B budget
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/king-county-council-passes-16-billion-budget-with-investments-in-housing-environment/
GIST	<p>The Metropolitan King County Council unanimously approved a \$16 billion two-year budget on Tuesday, making massive investments in housing, environmental, transit and public safety programs, as they grapple with how to replace hundreds of millions of dollars of pandemic-era federal aid that has run its course.</p> <p>While the County Council made some changes, the bulk of the approved budget represents proposals made earlier this fall by King County Executive Dow Constantine.</p> <p>The budget represents a 28% increase over the county's last biennial budget, which was passed in 2020. But that budget, passed in the early days of the COVID pandemic, was revised to add more money nine separate times, as public health needs skyrocketed, people lost jobs at record rates and businesses required</p>

emergency support. It also was passed at a time of plunging tax revenue, the result of plummeting economic activity due to the pandemic.

After those nine revisions are factored in, the new budget is a 4.8% increase over the previous one.

The new budget had to be passed without \$745 million in federal funding that the county received in 2021 and 2022 as part of various federal aid packages passed during the pandemic. That money has largely either been spent or expired.

“The Council took a strong budget from Executive Constantine and made further investments in community safety and engagement,” Councilmember Joe McDermott, the budget chair, said. “Whether in the future you are looking to find affordable housing in King County, seek behavioral health support or you’re riding Metro transit next year, you will see benefits.”

Constantine lauded the council’s work.

“This budget is a map of King County’s values,” he said in a prepared statement, “prioritizing investments in our environment, in prosperity, and in communities and populations farthest from opportunity, access, and justice — to make ours a welcoming community where every person can thrive.”

The new budget includes increased funding for law enforcement, to try and attract and retain officers to the sheriff’s department, and for law enforcement alternatives and oversight.

The approved budget, combined with a new collective bargaining agreement with the union representing sheriff’s deputies, means members of the King County Sheriff’s Office will begin, next year, wearing body cameras for the first time.

The county’s Office of Law Enforcement and Oversight, which provides independent oversight of the sheriff’s department, gained investigatory and subpoena power with the new collective bargaining agreement and will get funding for five new positions, including four new investigators. There is about \$1 million for new programs in the county’s youth detention center.

The budget includes \$220 million aimed at electrifying all 1,400 Metro buses by 2035. It includes \$3.5 million, added by the County Council, to clean bus stops and transit centers and improve safety and rider experience on buses.

The County Council added nearly \$25 million for capital projects including new community centers in the Chinatown International District and Fall City, and a new United Indians of All Tribes Canoe Center on South Lake Union.

It [funds the newly operating](#) King County Regional Homelessness Authority with \$96 million.

There is \$166 million to fund affordable housing near transit centers, supportive housing operations and coordinated crisis response efforts to homelessness.

The council added \$6.2 million to provide pay raises to homelessness and human services providers to keep up with inflation. The City of Seattle is currently [grappling with whether to do the same](#).

“Essential workers shouldn’t have to struggle to pay their grocery bills or rent,” said Alison Eisinger, executive director of the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness.

There is \$29 million to rehabilitate culverts blocking rivers and streams and preventing salmon from returning to spawning grounds. Another \$23 million would go to removing excess nitrogen and other nutrients from wastewater. And \$70 million would go toward land conservation, buying and preserving what Constantine has called “[the last, best” natural places](#), part of a larger program that voters [approved in November](#).

	The legislation leaves about 7% of the \$2.3 general fund budget undesignated, as a sort of rainy day fund for emergencies.
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HEADLINE	11/15 EPA restores WA water quality standards
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/feds-restore-wa-water-quality-standards-for-chemical-discharges/
GIST	<p>In a reversal of Trump administration policies, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this week reinstated federal water quality standards for chemicals discharged into Washington state waterways.</p> <p>The final rule signed Monday would ensure polluters stay within federally established levels of chemicals or conditions in a body of water that are not expected to cause adverse health effects.</p> <p>Through the years, the water quality standard for polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs — chemicals found in dyes, paints, building materials, coolants and other products — have been a point of contention. Industry leaders, like paper and pulp manufacturers, previously argued there was no technology available to bring wastewater discharge of PCBs to the low levels that were required.</p> <p>Sometimes these standards are aspirational, said Bill Dunbar, an EPA spokesperson. But that’s the story of the Clean Water Act, he said: that the technology will eventually catch up to meet these standards.</p> <p>In trace amounts, the PCBs are often present in wastewater discharges as well as municipal utility plants that treat stormwater runoff. Once in Puget Sound and freshwater drainage, they accumulate in fish and shellfish, so ingesting this food in large volumes can increase cancer risks.</p> <p>On Tuesday, EPA officials said the agency is finalizing limits for more than 70 pollutants in Washington waters with respect to the large amounts of fish and shellfish consumed by people in the state. The move will reinstate action by the Obama administration to toughen the water quality standard.</p> <p>Dennis McLerran, former regional administrator for the EPA, said the goal under the Obama administration was to get some consistency across Pacific Northwest waters. Washington was lagging behind Oregon, despite shared waters and watersheds between the two states.</p> <p>New science had revealed a wide variety of toxic contaminants in the water at lower levels were harmful to people, McLerran said. It became an environmental justice issue for people who rely on seafood for sustenance.</p> <p>Tribal leaders, who were disappointed by the Trump administration’s EPA decision, have pressed for tighter pollution limits, citing the risks to marine mammal, fish and human health.</p> <p>“We have relied on marine and freshwater resources for thousands of years and we need those resources to be clean and safe in order to survive and thrive as a people,” Patrick DePoe, vice chair of the Makah Tribal Council, said in a news release. “We hope that we can work with the United States and the State of Washington to build on this effort for continued improvement of water quality, and expect our federal and state partners to move forward based on sound science and fulfillment of their trust obligation to Tribes.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Seattle weighs ‘not a feel-good budget’
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-budget-amendments-make-few-big-adds-challenge-harrells-public-safety-plans/

In what she described as “not a feel-good budget,” Seattle City Council Budget Chair Teresa Mosqueda introduced Monday a series of budget revisions that take into account City Council’s input as well as [“dire” financial projections](#).

Since a revenue shortfall projected by city analysts has grown to \$141 million since the mayor proposed his budget in September, Mosqueda said she tried to keep the general shape of the mayor’s proposed budget in place, focusing on cuts to existing projects and services. However, her version challenges the new mayor’s plans for public safety.

“We had to make tough choices in this budget and invest in strategies that will allow for us to prevent cliffs, prevent austerity, prevent programs from ending before their need had diminished,” Mosqueda said when presenting the package of amendments Monday.

Mosqueda’s proposal includes adding \$1.5 million more for abortion access, a [\\$2 million add for mental health in schools in response to a fatal shooting at a North Seattle high school last week](#), and shifts in where [Jumpstart payroll tax revenues are spent](#) to align with the original spend plan, including restoring [planned pay increases for Human Service Department workers](#).

While Mosqueda repeatedly praised Mayor Bruce Harrell and his administration for a collaborative process — and Harrell agreed there had been “a new level of teamwork” between the two branches — the mayor expressed concerns with some of Mosqueda’s changes late Monday.

“As we further review line-item specifics, we will advocate for changes in several places in the continued spirit of this ongoing collaborative process,” Harrell said in a written statement.

Some of the biggest shifts, and concerns from the mayor, centered on public safety — specifically, the Seattle Police Department budget.

Mosqueda maintains most of Harrell’s proposed spending for the Seattle Police Department. Her package continues to fund the same number of vacant police positions and \$3.1 million of Harrell’s [\\$4.3 million officer recruitment and retention plan](#) — the trims come primarily from media services, not hiring incentives.

One of the most substantial cost shifts in Mosqueda’s series of amendments would [nix Harrell’s plan](#) to move parking enforcement officers and their roughly \$20 million budget back to the Police Department after a [messy attempt](#) by the city to separate the civilian ticket-writers from the police in 2021.

When the employees were moved in response to 2020 police accountability protests, the city encountered union pushback, \$5 million in unenforceable parking tickets and another \$5 million in recurring, unfunded administrative costs.

While all parties seem to agree that the team needs a better, more permanent home, Mosqueda plans to keep the parking enforcement officers in the Seattle Department of Transportation for 2023, but cover the administrative costs with about \$5 million from the stressed general fund and add another \$3 million to provide new and overtime funds, as well as restoring 90 positions that were cut when the team was originally moved

This way, Mosqueda says, the employees are not being moved around “like a hot potato” before an interdepartmental task force makes a decision next year on which department should permanently house the team.

A spokesperson for Harrell said Monday that the mayor does not support this change.

“We would welcome a task force to identify how we can further support these workers, but this transfer should not be contingent on that task force when employees have already made their position clear,” Communications Director Jamie Housen wrote in an email.

	<p>Another tweak to the police budget in Mosqueda’s package would make permanent an \$11 million trim proposed by Harrell, reducing the number of funded, unfilled positions in the department from 200 to 120.</p> <p>Harrell introduced the reduction — which doesn’t trim any officers and allows the department to hire more than the realistic number of recruits — for the next two years. Mosqueda’s amendment would make that change continue in perpetuity, though the positions could be added back through the standard budget process at any point.</p> <p>“Again, this is not a policy shift or opining on the number of officers,” Mosqueda said Monday. “This continues the policy that the mayor’s budget transmitted to ensure that funding is available in the general fund and that the department retains positions and salaries as they’ve defined.”</p> <p>Housen said the mayor’s office opposes the “permanent” change, noting that funding the unfilled positions would offer the department flexibility “when staffing levels recover.”</p> <p>Councilmember Alex Pedersen echoed Harrell’s concerns on both items after seeing the balancing package, saying Mosqueda’s changes “weaken” Harrell’s public safety-focused budget.</p> <p>“While I appreciate the hard work and positive investments of the City Budget Chair’s rebalancing package, it seems out of touch with communities demanding faster progress on public safety,” Pedersen wrote in an email.</p> <p>Council members have until Thursday to submit amendments, which will be debated on Nov. 21, and will take a final vote on the budget Nov. 29.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Lawsuit over corporate ownership database
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/business-group-sues-over-new-corporate-ownership-database/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — A small business lobbying group filed suit Tuesday to block the Treasury Department’s upcoming requirement that tens of millions of small businesses register with the government as part of an effort to prevent the criminal abuse of anonymous shell companies.</p> <p>The National Small Business Association argues that the new reporting rule violates the U.S. Constitution, saying it is unduly burdensome on small firms, violates privacy and free speech protections and infringes on states’ powers to govern businesses.</p> <p>The legal challenge points to the friction between maintaining privacy rights and the government’s effort to uncover sources of criminal activity, especially as the U.S. attempts to sanction Russian oligarchs and wealthy friends of Russian President Vladimir Putin since the start of his invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The wealthy Russians are accused of hiding stolen money and assets in the U.S. and around the world.</p> <p>“We already have very strong rules in place where financial institutions actually see the transfer of money through the economy, and do follow up on the data collected,” Todd McCracken, president of the small business group, said at a news conference. He said small business owners are “hugely concerned” about their private information being shared with the government.</p> <p>The group filed a lawsuit in Alabama federal court against the Treasury Department, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and acting director of the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network Himamauli Das.</p> <p>The rule finalized in September requires most American businesses with fewer than 20 employees — roughly 32.6 million companies — to register with the government as of Jan. 1, 2024. They must provide the government with details on their owners and others who benefit from them under a regulation that’s intended to peel back the layers of ownership that can hide unlawfully obtained assets.</p>

	<p>Treasury officials said the regulatory burden will be small, costing about \$85 per business, but will offer massive benefits to law enforcement, which will be one of few parties with access to the database. Small businesses are targeted because shell companies, often used to hide illegally obtained assets, tend to have few employees.</p> <p>Ian Gary, executive director of the FACT Coalition, a nonprofit that promotes corporate transparency, said in an email that the new rule “will protect our financial system and small businesses from the criminal abuse of anonymous shell companies.” A representative from Treasury declined to comment on the lawsuit.</p> <p>Kenyen Brown, an attorney representing the small business association, said the law, while well-intentioned, is a “gross government overreach.”</p> <p>“The right avenues for the government to gather money laundering and possible anti-terrorism financing activity is through transaction monitoring and financial institutions performing their due diligence,” he said, adding that the new registration rule “is not the way.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Burn ban: Snohomish, Pierce Counties
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/everett/burn-ban-snohomish-pierce-counties/281-255b10c3-17d7-40b8-a2d4-6247dd438a61
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. — The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency called for a burn ban for Greater Pierce County and Snohomish County, which continues indefinitely.</p> <p>Phil Swartzendruber, an Air Quality scientist at Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, said there are two types of burn bans. One is for fire safety and is more common during the summer months. The other is connected to air quality concerns and is more common during the winter months.</p> <p>This November burn ban is due to air quality. Swartzendruber said this stems from a combination of the weather and people.</p> <p>First, people are starting to burn wood because of how cold it is.</p> <p>Burning wood "is actually causing a rapid buildup of smoke and fine particles in the wintertime and raising them to levels that violate the federal health standards," said Swartzendruber.</p> <p>In addition, he said there are certain weather conditions that are a recipe for worsening air quality.</p> <p>“These cold, calm and clear conditions - there’s very little wind and the air doesn’t mix up very high - so all of that pollution stays very low, even just 20 or 30 feet above the ground and doesn’t move,” said Swartzendruber.</p> <p>He said it’s been three years since an Air Quality Burn Ban was implemented, due, in part, to these conditions not being present in recent years.</p> <p>He said the agency will enforce the ban. Violators could face up to a \$1,000 fine. He added that the goal is to educate everyone on the ban prior to issuing fines, though.</p> <p>The agency evaluates the conditions each day and determines if the ban needs to continue. Swartzendruber said a shift in the weather will need to occur to end the ban, which is expected by the weekend.</p> <p>The agency’s website has the latest on the status of the ban.</p> <p><u>During a Stage 1 burn ban:</u></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No burning is allowed in wood-burning fireplaces, uncertified wood stoves or fireplace inserts. Residents should rely instead on their home's other, cleaner source of heat (such as their furnace or electric baseboard heaters) for a few days until air quality improves, the public health risk diminishes and the ban is cancelled. • It is OK to use certified wood stoves and pellet stoves. • Homeowners that have a previously approved "No Other Adequate Source of Heat" exemption from the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency are allowed to continue using any fuel burning devices. • No outdoor fires are allowed. This includes recreational fires such as bonfires, campfires and the use of fire pits and chimeneas. • Burn ban violations are subject to a \$1,000 penalty. <p>It is OK to use natural gas and propane grills, stoves, or inserts during a Stage 1 burn ban.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Critical teacher shortage Port Angeles
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/education/teacher-shortage-port-angeles/281-2e3832d9-f906-4d7d-8923-89b7fd48da2e
GIST	<p>PORT ANGELES, Wash. — Administrators in the Port Angeles School District are warning of a "critical" shortage of staff that could have dire consequences.</p> <p>Ten-percent of the district's classroom positions are vacant, leaving teachers feeling like they have no choice but to go to work.</p> <p>"It's like I'd have to be hospital sick to not show up to work," said Dry Creek Elementary School teacher Kailee Lanier.</p> <p>Teachers, paraeducators and substitutes are all in short supply. Until recently, the district had 31 unfilled positions. That number is down to about 16, but officials say it's still too high.</p> <p>Lanier agrees.</p> <p>"Everyone has emergencies. Everyone gets sick. Kids get sick. Adults get sick, too. It's important we have someone available to come support our kids if the teacher is not here," Lanier said.</p> <p>At certain times, schools in Port Angeles have had to cancel classes and shuffle students to other teachers, creating classrooms of up to 30 kids.</p> <p>If one person calls in sick the ripple effects can be tidal, meaning entire classes could be closed.</p> <p>"That impacts all those families, parents' work schedules. It impacts students, of course," said Dry Creek Principal Julie Bryant, who has filled in as a substitute physical education teacher.</p> <p>Most concerning for Bryant is the fact that many students are still struggling to get back to grade level, post-pandemic.</p> <p>And time is ticking.</p> <p>"I worry about - without that consistency of having a safe adult in the room - that the progress will be not as great as we'd like it to be," she said.</p> <p>District Director of Special Services Dr. Rachel Summers said it's often special needs students who suffer the most.</p> <p>"With kiddos sometimes it can be a little bit stressful having someone working with them they may not be used to," she said.</p>

	<p>The district is offering bonuses and incentives of up to \$1,000 along with full benefits and retirement for new hires.</p> <p>Bus drivers are also needed.</p> <p>The district recently sent parents an email stating, "We are reaching out to let you know that we have just enough bus drivers to run our district's routes. Unfortunately, we do not have enough substitute bus drivers due to the national labor shortage. This shortage means if a driver calls out or is unavailable to work, we could see route delays ranging from 45 minutes to two hours in picking up or dropping off students."</p> <p>The district's transportation department has been using its mechanics, dispatcher, and director to drive routes to keep the buses moving since school started this year.</p> <p>Base pay for substitute bus drivers is \$23.40 per hour.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 NASA moon rocket launches w/Snoopy
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/snoopy-toy-onboard-nasa-moon-rocket-artemis-i/507-23a00273-6d4a-486c-8676-0b22546104de
GIST	<p>CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — One small step for man, one giant leap for Snoopy.</p> <p>The beloved cartoon beagle is aboard for NASA's Artemis I mission, which finally launched early Wednesday after three thwarted attempts and some hurricanes.</p> <p>The small, plush toy version of the iconic "Peanuts" character has an important job: zero gravity indicator. These small items are carried onboard as a way to tell when a spacecraft reaches the "weightlessness of microgravity," NASA says. Soft, light toys like the plush are good for the job because they can't break anything or hit buttons.</p> <p>Snoopy is dressed for the occasion in a custom orange flight suit, complete with tiny boots, gloves and a NASA patch. He'll ride in the Orion capsule with a manikin and two radiation-testing "passengers."</p> <p>The daydreaming beagle is no stranger to NASA missions. Apollo X astronauts looked to "Peanuts" for nicknames — the command module was called Charlie Brown, and the lunar module was Snoopy. Another plush Snoopy has been on the International Space Station, and NASA still honors employees with the Silver Snoopy Award.</p> <p>On a much larger scale, the suited-up beagle is a recent favorite at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.</p> <p>Craig Schulz, son of "Peanuts" creator Charles Schulz, said his father might have considered NASA's tributes the "biggest honor that could ever be bestowed upon his comic strip."</p> <p>"Space travel is almost become so normalized now," Schulz told the Associated Press last year. "People's attention span is a little weak, for the most part. So when you inject some of that entertaining Snoopy, you're going to capture the audience."</p> <p>Snoopy's trip was always part of the plan for the test flight, which has seen several delays and scrubbed launch attempts since its original target date early this year. The Orion spacecraft is set to circle the moon and return to Earth to make sure everything is working for future crewed missions.</p> <p>Snoopy's trip around the moon isn't just for entertainment — NASA's collaborations with Peanuts are also meant to educate. Peanuts and its partner GoNoodle previously released activities and short videos for kids to follow Snoopy along in space, like a two-minute video explaining how and why the doll was made. And</p>

	last year, Apple TV+ released a new season of "Snoopy in Space" about the planets and the search for extraterrestrial life.
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HEADLINE	11/15 China stole US data more than any country
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/china-stolen-american-data-country-fbi-director-wray/story?id=93337968
GIST	<p>China has stolen more of Americans business and personal data than all other countries put together, FBI Director Christopher Wray told a House committee Tuesday.</p> <p>"China's vast hacking program is the world's largest and they have stolen more Americans personal and business data than every other nation combined," Wray told the House Homeland Security Committee.</p> <p>Wray testified along with Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and Christine Abizaid, the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, at the annual "Worldwide Threats" hearing.</p> <p>The FBI director said the U.S. has concerns with China based app TikTok and its parent company ByteDance, which has been under scrutiny of U.S. regulators. The head of the Federal Trade Commission has said the app should be banned.</p> <p>"I would say we do have national security concern," Wray told Rep. Diana Harshberger, R-Tenn. "They include the possibility that the Chinese government could use to control data collection on millions of users or control the recommendation algorithm, which could be used for influence operations if they so chose or to control software on millions of devices, which gives the opportunity to potentially tactically compromised personal devices," he said.</p> <p>"So, there's a number of concerns there as to what is actually happening and actually being done," Wray said, adding there are questions about how data sharing works in China with companies required by Chinese law to share data with the government.</p> <p>Mayorkas also cited concerns about China.</p> <p>"China's using its technology to tilt the global playing field to its benefit," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 US deportation flights back to Cuba
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/us-deport-cubans-plane-coming-weeks-rcna57341
GIST	<p>The U.S. is planning to begin deporting Cuban migrants who crossed undocumented into the U.S. from Mexico on flights back to Cuba, two U.S. officials say.</p> <p>The officials said the flights will begin "in the coming weeks," as ICE locates Cubans with final orders of deportation to fill planes.</p> <p>Reuters first reported on Friday that the Cuban government has agreed to accept deportation flights.</p> <p>The deportation flights would be the first of their kind since the Trump administration as Cuba has recently refused to accept its own citizens back from the U.S.</p> <p>Cuba is now agreeing to accept deportees under a deal reached between the two countries that will restart visa processing for Cubans seeking to enter the U.S. legally.</p> <p>The number of Cubans crossing into the U.S. by land has drastically increased over the past year, in large part because Cubans are not sent back into Mexico due to Title 42 Covid-19 restrictions like migrants of other nationalities, who are still being pushed back across the border.</p>

	<p>More than 248,000 Cubans were apprehended crossing the U.S. southwest border over the past year, up from 43,677 the year prior, according to Customs and Border Protection figures. Those Cubans who arrived by land were allowed to apply for asylum. Those who have had their applications denied may now be deported by plane.</p> <p>The last deportation flight from the U.S. to Cuba left on Dec. 29, 2020, according to Tom Cartwright, an immigration activist with the advocacy group Witness at the Border who tracks each U.S. deportation flight by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.</p> <p>The Department of Homeland Security declined to comment on the plans for Cuban deportations.</p> <p>The agreement between the U.S. and Cuba comes after talks between both governments in Havana this week. The U.S. immigration policy toward Cuba known as “wet foot, dry foot” that allowed migrants who arrived in the U.S. since 1995 to stay while other nationalities were deported came to an end in 2017. The Trump administration ramped up deportations of Cubans, but so far the Biden administration has not coordinated large-scale Cuban deportations through ICE. Some Cubans interdicted at sea have been returned, however.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 AAA: busiest Thanksgiving travel in years
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/aaa-thanksgiving-travel-season-pre-pandemic/
GIST	<p>Millions of Americans are preparing to travel this Thanksgiving in numbers that compare to pre-pandemic times.</p> <p>AAA forecasts that this could be the third busiest Thanksgiving travel season since the travel agency first started keeping records in 2002.</p> <p>An estimated 54.6 million Americans will travel this Thanksgiving — a 1.5% increase from 2021. Most Thanksgiving travelers will drive to their locations despite record-high inflation and an increase in gas prices. AAA forecasts the national average gas price to be \$3.75 per gallon.</p> <p>"The desire for people to get back together with loved ones, they're going to do it no matter what the cost. They're going to budget in other areas of their life, but travel doesn't appear to be one of them," said Aixa Diaz, an AAA spokesperson.</p> <p>Car rental prices have declined in the last year but are still 47% higher compared with 2019, according to a survey conducted by the finance company NerdWallet. Prices for hotel stays are also up 6% from last October.</p> <p>This summer, air travel saw an increase in demand as more countries and regions loosened coronavirus restrictions. The demand is expected to carry into the holiday season, AAA forecasts air travel to rise nearly 8% compared with last year.</p> <p>The cost of flying is also expected to increase. AAA found that airfare in October rose 3.5% and was 43% more expensive than last year.</p> <p>For those who have not made it home and are in a financial crunch, relying on points and miles helps to cover the cost.</p> <p>"I used all my points and it was still around \$670, which is crazy. Without my points it would've been well over \$1,000," said Alexandra Cohen, a college student going home for the first time since last year.</p> <p>With 4.5 million Americans expected to head to airports, AAA recommends travelers seek alternate forms of transportation to airports as parking spaces could be limited, especially during peak travel times.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Nurse shortage: burnout, low morale
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/nurse-shortage-labor-shortage-travel-nurse-solutions/
GIST	<p>Nurses are considered the backbone of the U.S. health care system, but there's an unprecedented shortage. The U.S. needs more than 200,000 new registered nurses every year until 2030 to meet the demand.</p> <p>Caitlyn Hall, a nurse at Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C., said she loves her job but the last few years haven't been easy.</p> <p>"I think people are really exhausted," Hall said. "We've been relying on a lot of overtime these last few years to really fill kind of the holes on the unit."</p> <p>Travel nurses are a solution, but it comes at the cost of morale and the bottom line because they're offered more money than nurses on staff.</p> <p>Linda Talley, senior vice president and chief nursing officer at Children's National, said it's a challenge.</p> <p>"It drove the market prices to a level that, frankly, is unsustainable," Talley said. "What we're seeing now over time is that that's starting to level out a little bit. We would much, much prefer to invest in our own staff."</p> <p>Morale among her staff "waxes and wanes," Talley said.</p> <p>"Early on in the pandemic we all kept saying to ourselves, like, 'When do we get back to normal?'" she said. "Now we realize normal is a thing of the past."</p> <p>Nationwide, about one in five registered nursing jobs are unfilled, according to NSI Nursing Solutions Inc. Between the toll of the pandemic, an aging workforce and an aging population in need of more care, the shortage is only getting worse.</p> <p>Meanwhile, nursing schools are turning away tens of thousands of students because there isn't enough faculty to teach them.</p> <p>Many days, some nurses don't even have time to break for lunch.</p> <p>"It's a job where, if the people need you, you have to be there," said Hayley Roper, a nurse at Children's National. "You can't just, you know, say, 'Please hold.'"</p> <p>Talley says there needs to be a "care model redesign."</p> <p>"One idea that we are talking about right now, for example, is virtual nursing," Talley said. "What about a nurse who would otherwise may be thinking about reducing her hours or transitioning into retirement. Instead, could we take her expertise, connect her through an iPad to a nurse who is at the bedside, needs a second set of eyes?"</p> <p>Some hospitals are offering shorter shifts — making them eight hours instead of 12. Others have increased pay and offered bonuses or helped pay off student loans.</p> <p>"In this economy right now, the issues around cost of living are weighing heavily on our new nurse graduates in a way that I haven't seen in my 34 years," Talley said.</p> <p>Other solutions include hiring more international nurses, increasing funding to add more slots in nursing schools and mentoring from an early age.</p>

	<p>"I mean as early as elementary school," Talley said. "We have a program that allows us to go into high schools, for example, and begin to identify those who aspire to have a career in nursing."</p> <p>Solving the crisis also requires changing the narrative. Nursing is a hard job, but as Hall said, it's fulfilling.</p> <p>"You get all of the benefits of just feeling rewarding and feeling like you're doing something good," Hall said. "I think having those, like, redefining moments just has been incredible."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Putin scorched at G20, then came missiles
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/vladimir-putin-launches-missile-rampage-on-kyiv-after-scathing-presidential-diss-at-g20?ref=home
GIST	<p>In one of the largest attacks on Ukraine since the invasion began this year, Russia unleashed a barrage of approximately 100 missiles on Kyiv and other cities in Ukraine Tuesday, hitting residential buildings and leaving half of Kyiv residents without electricity, authorities said.</p> <p>Russia unleashed the barrage of missiles just hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky publicly lambasted Moscow at the G20 summit, referring to the group of member states as the "G19" in a slight to the Kremlin.</p> <p>The Ukrainian president virtually presented a ten-point peace plan to the summit, which included conditions that Russia withdraw its troops and Ukraine restore its territory. The proposal that Russia call it quits coincides with a crushing battlefield defeat for Moscow in the key city of Kherson.</p> <p>And although Ukraine worked to block some of Russia's attack with air defenses, top Ukrainian officials said they interpret the attack as a sign that Russia is not interested in taking Zelensky up on the offer and that negotiation is not on the table for now.</p> <p>"Russia responds to [Zelensky's] powerful speech at #G20 with a new missile attack," Andriy Yermak, the head of Zelensky's office, said. "Does anyone seriously think that the Kremlin really wants peace?"</p> <p>The missile attacks are a sign Russia does not have true, good-faith negotiations on the radar, Volodymyr Arieu, a Ukrainian lawmaker that is working to secure continued American aid to Ukraine, told The Daily Beast Tuesday over the phone between missile strikes.</p> <p>"We cannot trust" Russia to negotiate, Arieu said.</p> <p>"Negotiations, even during the time of war is, normal. But negotiations are successful if... all sides of the negotiations can hold their word and promises, and be responsible to fulfill commitments. Russia is completely not about it," Arieu told The Daily Beast. "We see no sense in the negotiations."</p> <p>The questions about whether Moscow is prepared to negotiate over the war in Ukraine, which is now in its ninth month, come as American officials appear to be testing the waters on potential negotiations. Just days ago the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, indicated that the wintertime may provide a "window of opportunity for negotiation" with Russia. U.S. officials have reportedly requested that the Zelensky administration signal an openness to negotiate with Moscow, according to The Washington Post.</p> <p>As Russian routs on the battlefield stack up, state-owned media in Russia have been amplifying narratives that western leaders are interested in negotiations as well.</p> <p>But the attacks Tuesday appear to have solidified Ukrainian resolve that Russia is not interested in peace, and that victory against Russia will have to come from the battlefield.</p>

“This is what Russia has to say on the issue of peace talks. Stop proposing Ukraine to accept Russian ultimatums,” Foreign Minister [Dmytro Kuleba](#) said. “This terror can only be stopped with the strength of our weapons & principles.”

Although some officials drew a connection between the proposal and the missile attack, a Ukrainian Air Force Command representative, Yuriy Ignat, warned earlier this week that Russia might use the timing of the [G20 summit](#) to attack Ukraine.

From a diplomatic perspective, Ukraine would do well to focus on relationships and pacts with other countries to counter Russia, rather than looking solely to Moscow for a path forward, according to Arieiev. “The only guarantee for Ukraine now... the best peace guarantee for Ukraine... is joining in on NATO,” Arieiev said.

The missile strikes could be a harbinger of more attacks to come. Russian forces have stepped up their [attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure](#) as Ukrainian counteroffensives have forced Russia to flee.

Already, Russian attacks have damaged Ukraine’s electricity grid and Ukrainian authorities have been conducting rolling blackouts.

“We don’t have a fatigue of the war,” Arieiev said, but there are “very difficult months ahead” given the impending winter. While on the phone with The Daily Beast, Arieiev mentioned that he was in a blackout.

Ukraine is working to establish [1,000 heating shelters](#), which can double as bunkers, to help in the winter months ahead, according to *The New York Times*. Some Ukrainians are planning evacuation if the situation grows worse, [CNN reported](#).

“This winter we have to be much more united now to succeed in contradiction to Russian invasion,” Arieiev told The Daily Beast.

The attacks Tuesday impacted energy generation and transfer, [German Galushchenko](#), the Minister of Energy of Ukraine, said, according to the Interior Ministry. The mayors of [Lviv](#), [Rivne](#), and [Kharkiv](#) reported some power outages as well.

[Zelensky](#) addressed Ukrainians Tuesday in an attempt to reassure civilians in the wake of the attacks. “We’re working, we’ll restore everything, we’ll live through everything,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Wagner secret plot against Russian elite?
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/putins-chef-yevgeny-prigozhin-accused-of-secret-plot-against-russian-elite?ref=home
GIST	<p>Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Russian businessman and Putin ally who shot from obscure notoriety to center stage in Russia’s war against Ukraine thanks to his ruthless tactics and deranged prison inmate-recruitment scheme, reportedly has plans to build his own political party.</p> <p>Sources cited by Meduza on Tuesday—and said to be close to both the Kremlin and Prigozhin—say the notorious Wagner overlord is weighing plans to establish a “conservative movement” that could later be turned into its own party.</p> <p>The movement, which reportedly plans to take aim at Russia’s elite, is said to have drawn inspiration from none other than Alexei Navalny’s team of anti-corruption campaigners who regularly release investigations targeting Putin’s closest associates.</p> <p>But in addition to modeling itself as an “anti-elite” movement, Meduza reports, Prigozhin also hopes to shape the movement out of a thirst for revenge over Russia’s losses in Ukraine.</p>

“He will cultivate a thirst for vengeance, for the military defeats — since, in the end, we’ll win all the same. Who is to blame if we didn’t make it to Kyiv, if we surrendered Kherson? Once again, the elites,” one source was quoted saying of Prigozhin’s vision.

Another source described the movement as a “niche project, designed for the ultra-patriotic majority” that “doesn’t support the authorities on everything and is critical of the elite, officials, and business.”

While it wasn’t immediately clear if Vladimir Putin was personally aware of Prigozhin’s political plans, it appears the “patriotic” movement ultimately leads back to him.

It is said to be a joint project between Prigozhin and the close Putin cronies Yury Kovalchuk and Mikhail Kovalchuk, who one source said are hoping to show the Russian president they are big-time “operators” in politics.

“For them, this is a tool for work in the patriotic segment, [as well as] intimidating and demoralizing the elite so that they don’t even think of jumping back from the president,” the source was quoted saying.

The move is said to be part of the reason why Prigozhin has seemed to suddenly relish in the spotlight in recent months, first going public with his role in Wagner after years of denying it, launching his own PR campaign for the group, and becoming unexpectedly vocal in his criticism of Russian defense officials.

Despite being accused of horrific abuses by human rights groups for his prison recruitment scheme, Prigozhin appears to have the full backing of the Kremlin.

Even after a Telegram-channel linked to him released a [savage execution video](#) over the weekend of a former Wagner fighter taking a sledgehammer to the head for daring to defect, the Kremlin mostly just looked the other way.

“It’s not our business,” Dmitry Peskov [said](#) Monday when asked about the video.

Prigozhin, perhaps emboldened by the Kremlin’s response, then appeared to engage in some high-level trolling, [petitioning Russia’s Prosecutor General](#) to investigate the CIA’s supposed involvement in the execution, claiming that the executed man, Yevgeny Nuzhin, had been recruited by the CIA years earlier, had infiltrated Wagner, and then had been taken out by the CIA.

In a statement through the press service of his company, Concord Management, Prigozhin on Tuesday denied having plans to start “any kind of political party or movement.”

“I’m just working and doing what anyone in my place should do,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/16 China locks down university: 1 Covid case
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/peking-university-locked-china-virus-cases-grow-93383998
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- Chinese authorities locked down a major university in Beijing on Wednesday after finding one COVID-19 case as they stick to a “zero-COVID” approach despite growing public discontent.</p> <p>Peking University students and faculty were not allowed to leave the grounds unless necessary and classes on the main campus — where the case was found — were moved online through Friday, a university notice said. Still, some people could be seen entering and leaving the main campus Wednesday in the Chinese capital’s Haidian district.</p> <p>Beijing reported more than 350 new cases in the latest 24-hour period, a small fraction of its 21-million population but enough to trigger localized lockdowns and quarantines under China’s “zero-COVID” strategy. Nationwide, China reported about 20,000 cases, up from about 8,000 a week ago.</p>

Authorities are steering away from citywide lockdowns to try to minimize the impact on freedom of movement and a sagging economy. They want to avoid a repeat of the Shanghai lockdown earlier this year that paralyzed shipping and prompted neighborhood protests. Revised national guidelines issued last week called on local governments to follow a targeted and scientific approach that avoids unnecessary measures.

Peking University has more than 40,000 students on multiple campuses, most in Beijing. It was unclear how many were affected by the lockdown. The 124-year-old institution is one of China's top universities and was a center of student protest in earlier decades. Its graduates include leading intellectuals, writers, politicians and businesspeople.

Lockdowns elsewhere have sparked scattered protests. Earlier this week, videos posted online showed crowds pulling down barriers in the southern city of Guangzhou in a densely built area that is home to migrant workers in the clothing industry.

Guangzhou, an industrial export hub near Hong Kong, reported more than 6,000 new cases in what is the nation's largest ongoing outbreak. The pandemic led the Badminton World Federation to move next month's HSBC World Tour Finals from Guangzhou to Bangkok, the federation announced this week.

Other cities with major outbreaks include Chongqing in the southwest, Zhengzhou in Henan province and Hohhot, the capital of the Inner Mongolia region in the north.

In Zhengzhou late last month, workers fled their dormitories at a sprawling iPhone factory, some climbing over fences to get out. Apple subsequently warned that customers would face delays in deliveries of iPhone14 Pro models.

Chinese officials and state media have stressed that the government is fine-tuning but not abandoning what it calls a "dynamic" zero-COVID policy, after rumors of an easing sparked a stock market rally earlier this month.

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HEADLINE	11/15 RSV hospitalizations for seniors higher
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/rsv-hospitalizations-seniors-higher-point-prior-seasons/story?id=93330280
GIST	<p>While respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, has been surging among children in the United States, older adults are being affected as well.</p> <p>Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that senior citizens are being hospitalized with the virus at this point in the season at a rate much higher than seen in seasons past.</p> <p>As of the week ending Nov. 5, the latest date for which data is available, adults aged 65 and older are being hospitalized at a weekly rate of 1.6 per 100,000.</p> <p>Although the raw number might seem small, it is much higher than usually seen at this time of year. CDC data going back to the 2014-15 season shows the rate has never been higher than 1.0 per 100,000 in early November.</p> <p>"Overall, it's very striking that we're seeing this level of RSV than we normally see across age groups," said Dr. John Brownstein, an epidemiologist and chief innovation officer at Boston Children's Hospital and an ABC News contributor. "While there's a lot of focus on the pediatric impact, we know RSV affects all vulnerable groups, including the elderly population."</p> <p>"The hospitalizations numbers are greater than anything we've seen in the past nine seasons," he added.</p> <p>An increase in respiratory viruses, including RSV, has been flooding pediatric hospitals and causing schools to shut down to stem the spread.</p>

Public health experts told ABC News the early rise in cases is due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last two years, children have been staying home from school, wearing masks and practicing social distancing, which has led to low RSV activity.

Now, with most pandemic measures relaxed, RSV is infecting both children who were born during the pandemic or primarily stayed home during the pandemic.

However, as more kids get exposed, so do more adults.

"Now all the children are back in school, they're going to birthday parties, they're playing with each other and we're having a very early surge in RSV all over the country," Dr. William Schaffner, a professor of preventive medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, told ABC News. "They're bringing it home and they're giving it to grandparents, Aunt Susie, Uncle Frank and other adults who have underlying illnesses and it's those adults who sometimes get illness severe enough to require hospitalization."

He continued, "So the adults are part of this surge that has been described mostly in terms of its impact on children in pediatric hospitals."

Adults with RSV typically experience the same symptoms as children including coughing, wheezing, fever, running nose, sneezing and decrease in appetite, according to the CDC.

While most cases can resolve with resting at home, drinking fluids and managing pain and fever, some adults are at higher risk of severe illness.

"First of all, advanced age, anybody over age 65, and of course, the older you are, the more likely you are to get severe illness," Schaffner said. "Second, underlying illness, particularly of the lung, and heart. So, if you have underlying lung disease or heart disease, those are the circumstances that put you at increased risk of getting more severe RSV infection that will impair your capacity to breathe and will require hospitalization."

There are currently no vaccines available that protect against RSV, although several are undergoing clinical trials, and some may undergo review from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. In the meantime, the experts recommend following similar mitigation measures followed during the pandemic.

"It's vaccinating against flu and COVID, it's masking, it's social distancing, it's staying home when sick," Brownstein said. "It's the same non-pharmaceutical interventions we've been promoting during COVID."

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HEADLINE	11/15 Rumors of M23 cause panic eastern Congo
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/rumors-rebel-advance-panic-eastern-congo-93354240
GIST	<p>GOMA, Congo -- Rumors of a rebel advance in eastern Congo sent scores of people fleeing toward the city of Goma on Tuesday, as former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta took his message of diplomacy to the embattled region.</p> <p>The chaos began in Kanyaruchinya when false information spread that the M23 rebels would soon reach a camp for displaced people.</p> <p>“We were sitting in the camp when we were told to evacuate. That’s why we are fleeing,” Sifa Ntaniko told The Associated Press. “They told us that the M23 are only a few meters (yards) away, and we are afraid.”</p> <p>The M23 rebels, whom Congo accuses of receiving support from neighboring Rwanda, have grabbed control of several key towns in recent weeks, more than doubling the territory they control. Rwanda has repeatedly denied rumors that it’s lending military support to M23.</p>

	<p>Lt. Gen. Constant Ndima, the military governor of North Kivu province, appealed for calm and said the rumors “are being spread by the enemy in order to create general panic among people.”</p> <p>Also Tuesday, the former Kenyan president arrived in Goma, where he spoke with journalists after an earlier stop in Kinshasa this week.</p> <p>“No matter what our differences are, even if we have our problems, please let’s stop this war,” Kenyatta said at a new conference. “These children, these mothers, these old men who don’t know why people are fighting, let’s have mercy on them. Let’s stop this war and start dialogue.”</p> <p>The rebel group rose to prominence about a decade ago when its fighters seized control of Goma, the largest city in the region. They later entered into a peace agreement with the government but reemerged late last year, saying the terms had not been met.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Quietly ramping up pressure on NKorea
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/leaders-quietly-work-ramp-pressure-korea-20-93367154
GIST	<p>NUSA DUA, Indonesia -- With all the big issues dominating this week’s meeting of leaders of the world’s biggest economies — war, famine, poverty, to name just a few — there’s been little public discussion of North Korea and its pursuit of nuclear-armed missiles.</p> <p>That's been the pattern for much of this year, despite North Korea testing dozens of missiles, including short-range weapons that are likely nuclear-capable and intercontinental ballistic missiles that could target the U.S. mainland.</p> <p>The United States and its two top Asian allies, however, have been working quietly on the sidelines of the Group of 20 meetings in Bali, Indonesia, to raise the issue of North Korea’s growing aggressiveness and build a broader coalition of like-minded states to help maintain international pressure on the country.</p> <p>North Korea has struggled to win attention from world leaders consumed with Russia's war in Ukraine, plunging economies, an increasingly tense competition between the United States and China, climate change and tensions in the Middle East — and those issues have all taken up much of the bandwidth during the G-20.</p> <p>South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida are trying to change that, urging action in their private talks with other leaders this week. Both held intensive discussions on North Korea in a three-way meeting with President Joe Biden ahead of the G-20.</p> <p>Worries over North Korea were also mentioned in high-profile talks between Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Bali, according to the U.S. president. And Yoon asked China to play a more active, constructive role in curbing the nuclear threat from North Korea when he met Xi on Tuesday.</p> <p>South Korean officials say North Korea may in coming weeks detonate its first nuclear test device since 2017. It would be aimed at forcing the United States and others to accept the idea of North Korea as a nuclear power, which could allow it to negotiate economic and security concessions from a position of strength.</p> <p>The United States has also accused North Korea of supplying ammunition to replenish depleted Russian stockpiles in Ukraine. North Korea has denied those claims.</p> <p>After Biden met with his Japanese and South Korean counterparts, the leaders set the right tone about the strength of their partnership in the face of the North Korean weapons tests, said Sung-Yoon Lee, a North Korea expert at Tufts University Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.</p>

But, he said, it leaves the allies open for more North Korean provocations, with the North “prone to using rhetorical criticism or defensive military drills by its adversaries as a pretext for escalating.”

Kishida, the Japanese leader, discussed North Korea in his bilateral talks in Bali, including with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Monday, with whom he shared “serious concern over North Korea’s nuclear and missile problems” and agreed to closely cooperate, according to Japan’s Foreign Ministry.

The issue will also be crucial for South Korea’s leader as he looks to urge world leaders in Bali to boost international pressure on North Korea.

Yoon’s diplomacy comes as a divide in the U.N. Security Council deepens over the war in Ukraine; that, in turn, complicates international efforts to sanction and pressure North Korea over its nuclear ambitions.

North Korea has used the distraction created by the war to ramp up its weapons launches. Russia and China, both permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, have rejected a U.S.-led proposal to strengthen sanctions on North Korea over its recent missile testing activity.

North Korea’s next nuclear test, which would be its seventh overall since 2006, could be the first one that the Security Council fails to meet with meaningful punitive measures.

The G-20 meeting is an opportunity for Yoon to communicate to world leaders that North Korea’s fast-growing nuclear threat extends well beyond the Korean Peninsula, said Bong Young-shik, an analyst at Seoul’s Yonsei University. That message has become clear to Japan, which saw an intermediate-range missile fly over its territory in September in one of North Korea’s most provocative tests in years.

South Korea is trying to take on a more assertive role in international affairs, and Yoon vowed to embrace many of Biden’s Asia policies during his presidential campaign.

That, however, could complicate South Korea’s relations with China, its biggest trading partner, as tensions intensify between Washington and Beijing over Taiwan, human rights and industrial supply chains.

In the meantime, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, never shy about using his weapons to display grievances on the world stage — and to agitate his rivals — may resume weapons tests in coming weeks.

“I would think Kim Jong Un has been sharpening his knife for this very moment and would gleefully exploit both Yoon’s and Kishida’s absence from home by, at the very least, firing more missiles into (South Korean) waters,” said Lee, the Tufts professor.

“Kim Jong Un may be thinking, ‘Never let an opportunity to create a domestic crisis for my foes go to waste,’” Lee said.

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HEADLINE	11/16 Poland: Russia-made missile falls, kills 2
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/zelenskyy-battle-kherson-day-watershed-93318926
GIST	<p>WARSAW, Poland -- Poland said early Wednesday that a Russian-made missile fell in the country’s east, killing two people, though U.S. President Joe Biden said it was “unlikely” it was fired from Russia.</p> <p>The blast, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy decried as “a very significant escalation,” prompted Biden to call an emergency meeting of G-7 and NATO leaders. A deliberate, hostile attack on NATO member Poland could trigger a collective military response by the alliance.</p>

But key questions around the circumstances of the missile launch remained amid the confusion caused by a blistering series of Russian airstrikes across the nearby border in Ukraine, none larger than who fired it. Russia denied any involvement in the Poland blast.

Three U.S. officials said preliminary assessments suggested the missile was fired by Ukrainian forces at an incoming Russian one amid the crushing salvo against Ukraine's electrical infrastructure Tuesday. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

That assessment and Biden's comments at the Group of 20 summit in Indonesia contradict information earlier Tuesday from a senior U.S. intelligence official who told the AP that Russian missiles crossed into Poland.

The Polish government said it was investigating and raising its level of military preparedness. Biden pledged support for Poland's investigation.

A statement from the Polish Foreign Ministry identified the weapon as being made in Russia. President Andrzej Duda was more cautious, saying that it was "most probably" Russian-made but that its origins were still being verified.

"We are acting with calm," Duda said. "This is a difficult situation."

Biden's decision to convene the emergency meeting upended schedules for the final day of the Group of 20 meeting in Indonesia.

Biden, who was awakened overnight by staff with the news of the missile while attending the summit, called Polish President Andrzej Duda to express his condolences. On Twitter, Biden promised "full U.S. support for and assistance with Poland's investigation," and "reaffirmed the United States' ironclad commitment to NATO."

Meanwhile, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg called the meeting of the alliance's envoys in Brussels. The U.N. Security Council also planned to meet Wednesday for a previously scheduled briefing on the situation in Ukraine. The strike in Poland was certain to be raised.

Poland's statement did not address whether the strike could have been a targeting error or if the missile could have been knocked off course by Ukrainian defenses.

In their statements, Poland and NATO used language that suggested they were not treating the missile blast as an intentional Russian attack, at least for now. A NATO statement called it a "tragic incident."

If Russia had deliberately targeted Poland, it would risk drawing the 30-nation alliance into the conflict at a time when it is already struggling to fend off Ukrainian forces.

Polish media reported that the strike took place in an area where grain was drying in Przewodów, a village near the border with Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry denied being behind "any strikes on targets near the Ukrainian-Polish border" and said in a statement that photos of purported damage "have nothing to do" with Russian weapons.

Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau summoned the Russian ambassador and "demanded immediate detailed explanations," the government said.

The strike came to light as Russia pounded Ukraine's energy facilities with its biggest barrage of missiles yet, striking targets across the country and causing widespread blackouts.

The barrage also affected neighboring Moldova. It reported massive power outages after the strikes knocked out a key power line that supplies the small nation, an official said.

The missile strikes plunged much of Ukraine into darkness and drew defiance from Zelenskyy, who shook his fist and declared: “We will survive everything.”

In his nightly address, the Ukrainian leader said the strike in Poland offered proof that “terror is not limited by our state borders.”

“We need to put the terrorist in its place. The longer Russia feels impunity, the more threats there will be for everyone within the reach of Russian missiles,” Zelenskyy said.

Russia fired at least 85 missiles, most of them aimed at the country's power facilities, and blacked out many cities, he said.

The Ukrainian energy minister said the attack was “the most massive” bombardment of power facilities in the nearly 9-month-old invasion, striking both power generation and transmission systems.

The minister, Herman Haluschenko, accused Russia of “trying to cause maximum damage to our energy system on the eve of winter.”

The assault killed at least one person in a residential building in the capital, Kyiv. It followed days of euphoria in Ukraine sparked by one of its biggest military successes — the retaking last week of the southern city of Kherson.

The power grid was already battered by previous attacks that destroyed an estimated 40% of the country's energy infrastructure.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has not commented on the retreat from Kherson since his troops pulled out in the face of a Ukrainian offensive. But the stunning scale of Tuesday's strikes spoke volumes and hinted at anger in the Kremlin.

By striking targets in the late afternoon, not long before dusk, the Russian military forced rescue workers to labor in the dark and gave repair crews scant time to assess the damage by daylight.

More than a dozen regions — among them Lviv in the west, Kharkiv in the northeast and others in between — reported strikes or efforts by their air defenses to shoot missiles down. At least a dozen regions reported power outages, affecting cities that together have millions of people. Almost half of the Kyiv region lost power, authorities said.

The deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, said a total of 15 energy targets were damaged and claimed that 70 missiles were shot down. A Ukrainian Air Force spokesman said Russia used X-101 and X-555 cruise missiles.

With its battlefield losses mounting, Russia has increasingly resorted to targeting Ukraine's power grid, seemingly hoping to turn the approach of winter into a weapon by leaving people in the cold and dark.

The strikes came as authorities were already working furiously to get Kherson back on its feet and beginning to investigate alleged Russian abuses there and in the surrounding area. The southern city is without power and water.

The retaking of Kherson dealt another stinging blow to the Kremlin. Zelenskyy likened the recapture to the Allied landings in France on D-Day in World War II, saying both were watershed events on the road to eventual victory.

But large parts of eastern and southern Ukraine remain under Russian control, and fighting continues.

	<p>In other developments, leaders of most of the world's economic powers were drawing closer to approval of a declaration strongly denouncing Russia's invasion.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Biden and Zelenskyy pressed fellow G20 leaders at the summit in Indonesia for a robust condemnation of Russia's nuclear threats and food embargoes. More discussion and a possible vote were expected Wednesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Judge halts Title 42 removal of migrants
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/federal-judge-halts-rapid-removal-migrants-pandemic-era/story?id=93358904
GIST	<p>A federal judge on Tuesday struck down a Trump-era policy of rapidly expelling migrants from the border in the name of pandemic health precautions.</p> <p>The order relied on a decades-old public health law known as Title 42 and was implemented by Donald Trump's administration at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Authorities at the southern border have carried out more than 2.2 million Title 42 expulsions since it began.</p> <p>Earlier this year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention under President Joe Biden attempted to pull back the order, but it was held in place by a legal challenge from Republican-led states. That case was rendered moot by Tuesday's ruling, which takes issue with the original basis for conducting the expulsions.</p> <p>U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan ruled that the impact on public health was minimal, noting millions of people have crossed the land border since the Title 42 removals were first implemented in 2020.</p> <p>Sullivan also wrote that the policy was "arbitrary and capricious" and violated federal law.</p> <p>The CDC should not have ignored the consequences of sending migrants back to potential harm, Sullivan wrote.</p> <p>"It is undisputed that the impact on migrants was indeed dire," he wrote.</p> <p>"The ruling hopefully puts an end to one of the most draconian asylum policies this country has ever enacted," American Civil Liberties Union's Lee Gelernt, lead attorney on the case, said Tuesday.</p> <p>Immigrant advocates have fought the Title 42 order from the beginning, underscoring the severe limitations it placed on the ability for migrants to apply for humanitarian protections including asylum.</p> <p>Given the fast-track nature of the Title 42 removals, migrants had little to no opportunity to secure legal resources or find an attorney before they were sent back. Under U.S. law, non-citizens on U.S. soil have the right to seek humanitarian relief.</p> <p>Sullivan, in his ruling, noted that as well, writing that "it is unreasonable for the CDC to assume that it can ignore the consequences of any actions it chooses to take in the pursuit of fulfilling its goals, particularly when those actions included the extraordinary decision to suspend the codified procedural and substantive rights of noncitizens seeking safe harbor."</p> <p>While the Biden administration has fought the policy in court as well, it has continued relying on Title 42 to expel migrants at the border -- over a million this past budget year.</p> <p>The Department of Homeland Security said earlier this year it was making preparations for the end of the Title 42 order including by adding personnel at the border, streamlining processing and continuing to enforce expedited removal for those ineligible for humanitarian protections.</p>

	<p>In the wake of Sullivan's ruling, the government asked the court for a five-week hold on its order to end Title 42 protocols to allow for a transition period before resuming standard immigration processing across the southwest border.</p> <p>"[The Department of Homeland Security] requires a short period of time to prepare for the transition from Title 42 to Title 8 processing, given the need to resolve resource and logistical issues that it was unable to address in advance," Department of Justice attorneys wrote.</p> <p>DHS said in a statement, in part, that "the delay in implementation of the court's order will allow the government to prepare for an orderly transition to new policies at the border. But to be clear, under the unopposed motion, Title 42 would remain in place for some period. During the period of this freeze, we will prepare for an orderly transition to new policies at the border."</p> <p>The administration recently secured agreement with the government of Mexico to start sending back Venezuelan migrants who have made up a growing share of those who attempt to cross into the U.S. without authorization.</p> <p>Simultaneously, the administration opened up a new legal pathway for some Venezuelans with valid passports.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/14 US embassy convoy attacked in Haiti
SOURCE	https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2022/11/14/politics/us-haiti-convoy-attack/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A US embassy convoy was attacked in Haiti on Monday, according to a senior US official and a State Department spokesperson.</p> <p>A Haitian driver was slightly injured but no embassy staff were hurt, the official said.</p> <p>"Armed individuals fired shots at the Haitian National Police vehicles, US Embassy vehicles, and Haitian commercial vehicles this morning," the State Department spokesperson said.</p> <p>"No embassy personnel were injured," they said. "One Haitian commercial driver accompanying the convoy was injured with non-life-threatening injuries."</p> <p>"We do not have any additional information at this time," the spokesperson said.</p> <p>A security source in Haiti, who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak, confirmed that a US embassy convoy was attacked by the 400 Mawozo gang Monday.</p> <p>The attack is the latest incident in a country overtaken by violent gangs and comes a year after the nation's serving President Jovenel Moise was murdered. Port-au-Prince was the site of brutal gang battles this summer that saw whole neighborhoods set aflame, displacing thousands of families and trapping others in their homes, afraid to leave even in search of food and water.</p> <p>Late last month a Haitian politician, Eric Jean Baptiste was shot dead outside his home and the number of Haitians displaced by recent gang-related violence in the capital has tripled in the past five months, the United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM) said last month.</p> <p>The IOM report said more than 113,000 people were internally displaced from Port-au-Prince between June and August this year, with nearly 90,000 of them due to "urban violence linked to inter-gang, gang-police, and social conflicts."</p>

	<p>Criminals still control or influence parts of the country's most populous city, and kidnappings for ransom threaten residents' day-to-day movements. In recent weeks, demonstrators in several cities called for Prime Minister Ariel Henry's resignation in the face of high fuel prices, soaring inflation and unchecked crime.</p> <p>Last month, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned what he called an "absolutely nightmarish situation" in Haiti with gangs blocking the movement of fuel and other materials in the Port-au-Prince harbor. The country is facing a humanitarian crisis, while a cholera outbreak has also left dozens dead.</p> <p>Guterres has urged the international community to consider deploying forces to the country to address growing humanitarian and security crises in the country.</p> <p>Biden administration officials are working with "capitals around the world to discuss the potential for a mission endorsed by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said last week, but the makeup of any such mission remains unclear.</p> <p>"The status quo remains untenable. It remains untenable for the Haitian people. We hope to see continued improvement in the humanitarian situation. The actions of the Haitian National Police may lead to further improvements. But there continue to be longer-term challenges that an enabling force authorized by the UN Security Council would be able to help address," Price said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Musk issues ultimatum to Twitter staff
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/11/16/musk-twitter-email-ultimatum-termination/
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO – Elon Musk issued an ultimatum to Twitter employees Wednesday morning: Commit to a new “hardcore” Twitter or leave the company with severance pay.</p> <p>Employees were told they had to sign a pledge to stay on with the company. “If you are sure that you want to be part of the new Twitter, please click yes on the link below,” read the email to all staff, which linked to an online form.</p> <p>Anyone who did not sign the pledge by 5 p.m. Eastern time Thursday was told they would receive three months of severance pay, the message said.</p> <p>In the midnight email, which was shared with The Washington Post, Musk said Twitter “will need to be extremely hardcore” going forward. “This will mean working long hours at high intensity,” he said. “Only exceptional performance will constitute a passing grade.”</p> <p>The pledge email, paired with a new policy mandating a return to the office, is expected to lead to even more attrition at a company whose staff Musk had already reduced by half.</p> <p>It also comes as Musk says he is tabling Twitter’s Blue Verified, his first major product since taking over as Twitter’s owner and CEO, while the company sorts out issues with the feature following a botched rollout.</p> <p>A week ago, Twitter debuted the product, which gives users a blue check-mark icon next to their name for a fee of \$7.99 a month, and promises to reduce the number of ads they see by half as well as giving their posts additional visibility. By Friday, the option disappeared amid a rash of fake accounts impersonating everyone from President Biden to basketball star LeBron James.</p> <p>Sign-ups were paused Thursday night and the service wouldn’t “relaunch” until Nov. 29 “to make sure that it is rock solid,” Musk announced via a tweet late Tuesday.</p>

But inside Twitter, staff were using the additional two weeks to conduct a postmortem on the launch, trying to understand why the impersonations spiraled out of control, according to a person with knowledge of the internal discussions who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

The launch – and its backtrack – was the culmination of a whirlwind couple weeks of ownership for Musk, who bought the company for \$44 billion late last month. People familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe internal matters, as well as internal and externally compiled data reviewed by The Post, showed the new service failed to gain much traction during its brief stint – skewing toward just a few niche communities and threatening Twitter’s core advertising revenue.

Power users are most likely to subscribe, but they are also the company’s primary advertising base – a key driver of revenue. Twitter would need to charge \$44 a month to recoup the advertising value generated by the top segment of U.S. power users if it relied only on subscriptions, according to an internal document reviewed by The Post. The more active the user, the higher the subscription price would need to be, according to the documents – which warned of the opportunity cost of cutting ads and high subscription prices needed if Twitter were to make up for the revenue generated by ad-consuming power users.

Meanwhile, those who subscribed to Blue Verified were often accounts promoting right-wing politics, cryptocurrency speculation and users hawking adult content such as pornography, a review of Twitter data compiled by a software developer showed.

About 150,000 users were subscribed to Twitter Blue – which encompasses Blue Verified – at the time of the pause, according to one of the people with knowledge of internal matters, a figure corroborated by internal data on tweets from Verified accounts and an external analysis. That’s just 0.06 percent of the roughly 250 million people estimated to use Twitter each day.

That subscriber figure would bring in only \$14.4 million annually in revenue – while threatening the ad revenue generated from super users who pay for Twitter Blue who will see fewer advertisements, a trade-off that was warned about in the internal document predating Musk’s takeover.

Musk has tweeted that new subscribers would see “Half as many ads.”

Musk and Twitter did not respond to requests for comment on the Twitter Blue developments.

Musk purchased the site late last month and has since ousted Twitter’s leadership, made himself CEO and laid off half the workforce. He now needs to find ways to drive new revenue sources, as Twitter is expected to owe roughly \$1 billion in annual interest – plus recoup the investments of Musk’s many equity partners.

Already advertisers are proving wary, something exacerbated last month when Musk tweeted a conspiracy-laden article about the attack on House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s husband Paul Pelosi. The Blue Verified debacle, where some major brands were impersonated, only added to their concerns.

The Post reported this week that a fake tweet using the name and logo of Eli Lilly may have cost Twitter millions, after the pharmaceutical giant paused ad spending on the site. Other companies including General Motors, Volkswagen and General Mills said they were pausing advertising after Musk took over – some brands acting in conjunction with calls from civil rights groups to do so.

While trying to appease advertisers, Musk has also turned his focus to subscription models and potential paywalls.

Twitter Blue – which previously allowed users to edit tweets, among other features – had around 100,000 subscribers before the new launch including paid verification, according to the website Platformer.

Twitter earned about 79 percent of its U.S. ad revenue from just 10 percent of its most valuable users, according to the internal document reviewed by The Post. Its top 1 percent of U.S. users – who are in turn the ones most likely to shell out \$8 – earn the service more than \$40 each month in revenue, the document shows.

Only a smidgen of the 150,000 Twitter Blue subscribers are fake or joke accounts, according to data compiled from Twitter’s public data feed for software developers. A large portion of the most-followed accounts that got “verified” via Twitter Blue, according to the data reviewed by The Post, are from a few specific subcommunities on Twitter: pornography, cryptocurrency advocates and overseas accounts, particularly from the Middle East.

The data was compiled by Berlin software developer Travis Brown and reviewed and verified by The Post.

According to the data, most of the members of a list of some 135,000 Twitter Blue subscribers were ordinary users with a few hundred followers who had been on the site for more than six years. (It’s not clear how many had subscribed to the earlier, pre-Musk iteration of the Twitter Blue program.)

Twitter, unlike many other social networks, allows sexually explicit imagery. Many of the adult performers on Twitter use the site as the top of their marketing funnel to attract new paying customers, with their Twitter display names advertising the price of a subscription on other paid sites such as OnlyFans where they show their content.

Twitter is rushing to launch a paid video feature that could let their customers pay on Twitter instead of elsewhere, The Post reported earlier this month – though the site’s internal watchdog flagged the product as “high risk.” A previous adult-content-focused subscription service product was shelved, before Musk’s ownership of Twitter, after the company realized it could not guarantee it wasn’t monetizing child sexual abuse material, Platformer reported in August.

Nearly 10 percent of overall Twitter Blue subscribers talk about cryptocurrency on their profile pages, including popular crypto news and accounts that promote crypto investments that they predict will rise, according to The Post’s review.

One major group of new Twitter Blue subscribers are right-wing influencers. Some 150 accounts that disproportionately interact with at least five prominent right-wing influencers signed up to gain verification this way.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Portland mayor’s texts missing for years
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/thousands-of-portland-mayors-texts-gone-from-public-record/
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Thousands of text messages from Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler’s city-issued iPhone and the phones of other top officials went missing for years from the public record, including texts he sent after former President Donald Trump directed federal agents to the city to quell nightly racial justice protests.</p> <p>Oregon Public Broadcasting reports the city uses specialized software to capture text messaging on city-issued phones so they can be retained for public record requests, but the software can’t capture encrypted messages sent using Apple’s iMessage service.</p> <p>OPB’s investigation found the mayor and his staff sent and received thousands of iMessage texts between 2017 and 2021 and those messages were not captured — and therefore not included — in key public records requests about the protests, policing and other issues.</p>

Users can turn iMessage off and instead send texts outside Apple's proprietary system by toggling a button in the iPhone's settings. Wheeler and other city officials signed a document saying they understood they must toggle iMessage to the off position and Wheeler was repeatedly reminded of that, OPB reported.

Ten months after Wheeler signed the form, iMessage was turned on on the mayor's iPhone, the outlet reported. The mayor then received over 6,400 iMessages between January 2019 and September 2021, according to a spreadsheet of all Wheeler's texts from that period requested by OPB.

Wheeler declined to comment to OPB. His spokesman, Cody Bowman, said in an email to The Associated Press on Tuesday that the mayor "never manually turned on iMessage" and was fully compliant with the archiving system.

"Mayor Wheeler made his phone available to ensure that texts were manually captured," Bowman said.

OPB obtained the spreadsheet of the missing texts after it discovered city attorneys, concerned about his non-compliance, used special software in late 2021 to export all the content on the mayor's phone — but iMessages sent on Wheeler's previous city-issued phones are lost forever.

Senior Deputy City Attorney Jenifer Johnston told OPB that "all messages on (his) iPhone are essentially iMessage."

The lost messages include from several former city commissioners and Wheeler's former police advisor Robert King. They all used iMessage and left before Portland realized the problem and extracted iMessages from current phones.

King advised the mayor on the racial justice protests, two fatal police shootings and clashes between far-right and far-left groups during the time in question. The city received a dozen fruitless public records requests seeking King's texts.

From 2018 to 2021, the mayor's office alone received over 130 requests for text messages from both press and constituents. For example, the city omitted 1,300 relevant texts spanning nearly every pivotal protest moment after a public records request by a local activist group because they had been sent in iMessage, OPB reported.

"I don't see that there's any way that this isn't a violation of law," said Ginger McCall, Oregon's first-ever Public Records Advocate who now works at a progressive advocacy group in Washington D.C. "... They clearly didn't fulfill their legal obligation. That's a nice way of putting it."

By 2021, staff with the city's technology bureau, were sending increasingly frantic emails about the mayor's conduct. They wrote that he was "re-enabling iMessage every time" even though he had been told repeatedly that doing so made the automatic text archiving impossible.

Bowman, Wheeler's spokesman, said Tuesday that while city staff initially thought Wheeler disabled iMessage himself, they now know that's not the case.

iMessage could have been turned on on the mayor's phone without his knowledge when he got a new phone; when he changed his SIM card; when he synced his work phone with iTunes; or when he sent a message to a non-city employee who did use iMessage, Bowman said.

"What the City did not realize until very recently was all the ways that iMessage could unintentionally and inadvertently be turned on when using the Apple device," he said in an email to the AP.

Johnston, Portland's senior deputy city attorney, said she is confident the city operated in good faith.

"What I understand the law requires is that we perform a reasonable search," she said. "And our search was reasonable based on what we knew at the time."

	By December 2021, all elected officials had iMessage irreversibly blocked.
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HEADLINE	11/15 GAO: DOD cyber reports incomplete
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/majority-of-dod-cyber-incident-reports-are-incomplete-gao-finds/
GIST	<p>Failures in reporting cyber incidents at the U.S. Department of Defense risks leaving commanders in the dark about the effects hackers could have on their missions, according to a new report by the Government Accountability Office.</p> <p>While external information sharing around the Russian invasion of Ukraine has won the DOD and broader U.S. security and intelligence community plaudits, the lack of internal information sharing within the DOD and the defense industry is leading to “lost opportunities to identify system threats and improve system weaknesses.”</p> <p>The 70-page report published on Monday warns that hackers are continuing to target the DOD itself alongside the U.S. defense industrial base.</p> <p>“Until DOD assigns responsibility for ensuring complete and updated incident reporting and proper leadership notification, the department will not have assurance that its leadership has an accurate picture of its posture,” the report warns. “As a result, the department may miss opportunities to assess threats and weaknesses, gather intelligence, support commanders, and share information.”</p> <p>All cyber incidents affecting the DOD are required to be reported as a ticket into a central repository known as JIMS (the Joint Incident Management System) within 6 to 24 hours of discovery, and then to be updated afterwards as more information comes to light, although the report states this rarely happened.</p> <p>Critical cyber incidents — incidents “related to enemy activity, potential enemy activity, or anomalous activity on the department’s information networks” — also require significant activity reports (SIGACTs) to notify commanders at all levels.</p> <p>“However, DOD has not fully implemented either of these processes,” stated the GAO report, which gave as examples of critical incidents “DODIN (Department of Defense Information Network) outages or degradations, escalation of privileges, data exfiltration, and evidence of malware.”</p> <p>Problem by design?</p> <p>While the total number of incidents themselves are trending downwards — with 948 reported in 2021 compared to 3,880 in 2015 — the GAO report found “weaknesses” in how these incidents were reported.</p> <p>The DOD’s cyber incident reporting system “often contained incomplete information,” according to the report, and the department “could not always demonstrate that they had notified appropriate leadership of relevant critical incidents.”</p> <p>According to the GAO report, 91% of JIMS cyber incident reports submitted between 2015 and 2021 “did not include information on the discovery date of the incident, hindering DOD’s ability to determine whether incidents were reported in JIMS in a timely manner.”</p> <p>It added that 68% percent of the reports “did not include information on an incident’s delivery vector, limiting DOD’s ability to identify trends in the prevalence of various threats affecting its networks.”</p> <p>Partially these issues are caused by the design of JIMS. While the DOD’s official Cyber Incident Handling Program Manual requires 46 different data fields for reporting a cyber incident, JIMS only requires users to include information on 13 of the 46 fields –with the other data fields either presented as optional (such as operational impact and system weaknesses) or unavailable (such as root cause(s) and systems affected) in the system.</p>

	DOD officials “acknowledged that JIMS has limitations” according to the GAO report and “are considering implementing a new solution to address those limitations.”
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HEADLINE	11/15 Pirated movies bring war reality to Russians
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/how-ukrainians-are-using-pirated-movies-to-bring-wars-reality-to-russian-viewers/
GIST	<p>In recent months, many Russians who have tried to watch popular shows like The Walking Dead and Stranger Things have been interrupted by an unusual advertisement. The shows cut to a man in a white hoodie, telling stories about the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>“I know this is not the content you expected, but it is what you need to see. This is the illegal truth about Russia’s war in Ukraine,” the man says, before clips start playing of a house exploding from a missile strike, parents crying over the body of a murdered child, or corpses being pulled out from under the rubble.</p> <p>The man in the hoodie is a Ukrainian named Volodymyr Biriukov, one of eight journalists and activists behind a digital campaign called Torrents of Truth. Its members hack pirated movies on torrent trackers to bypass Russian censorship efforts and broadcast real footage from the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Most Russians today cannot easily stream popular Hollywood movies such as The Matrix or Doctor Strange. In response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, major international production companies and streaming services, including Netflix, Disney, and Warner Bros, have suspended the release of their films in Russia.</p> <p>As a result, many Russians resort to digital piracy — some Russian cinemas even openly screen pirated movies to stay in business. Before the war, U.S.-produced films and TV series made up nearly 70% of the Russian film market.</p> <p>These digital piracy habits attracted the attention of marketing agencies 72andSunny and Nebo. Earlier in April, the two companies — which have ties to Ukraine — launched Torrents of Truth to “spread the truth about the war in Ukraine among Russians.”</p> <p>It works like this: Torrents of Truth members upload videos about the war to popular torrent trackers — RuTracker, Demonoid, or The Pirate Bay — disguising them as pirated movies, music, or Netflix shows. Each bootleg copy contains war footage, which interrupts the movie like a commercial.</p> <p>Torrents of Truth is one of many Ukrainian digital initiatives that aim to break through Russian propaganda. Ukrainian hacktivists are trying to achieve similar goals with coordinated distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, the defacement of Russian websites, and the hijacking of Kremlin-controlled TV channels.</p> <p>Although it is difficult to assess the impact of these actions, since there are still no mass anti-war or anti-regime protests in Russia, Biriukov is convinced that all cyber efforts give Ukrainians an advantage against Russia. After all, Russian propaganda still relies heavily on television, which has less influence on the younger generation.</p> <p>“The internet can be the antidote to Russian propaganda,” he told The Record. “If Ukraine wasn’t so successful on the information front, perhaps the world would believe more in what Russia says.”</p> <p>Bypassing Russian censorship</p> <p>Since the beginning of the war, the Kremlin has tried to hide from ordinary people the full extent of its military activity in Ukraine. For example, the government ordered the Russian media to call the war a “special operation” aimed at “denazifying” and “demilitarizing” Ukraine.</p> <p>To break through the Russian iron curtain, Ukrainians sent messages to the Russians on social networks or even called them using phone numbers leaked by hacktivists from Russian websites and state registers.</p>

All these efforts were chaotic and poorly coordinated. Torrents of Truth emerged as a more reliable alternative.

“Before launching the project, we interviewed Russian oppositionists to understand which messages would be more persuasive,” Kokoshko told The Record.

For example, it turned out that many Russians don’t know where to get reliable information about the war, so in every folder with a pirated movie Torrents of Truth adds a text file with a list of trustworthy news sources.

Another distinctive feature of the campaign is that it doesn’t specifically blame Russians for the war and the atrocities of its army, but rather calls on them to act.

In total, Torrents of Truth uploaded 21 torrent files on RuTracker, Demonoid, The Pirate Bay, 1337x, and other torrent trackers popular in Russia. Among these files are newly-released movies and series such as The Matrix, Ozark, Stranger Things, and Peaky Blinders.

The most difficult part of the process was to upload the film to the torrent platform and not get banned, according to Kokoshko. Another challenge was to make the content popular, as movies that are downloaded the most get the most visibility.

Some torrent files have more than a thousand downloads, she said, but it is impossible to say how many Russians have viewed the content.

Torrents of Truth has estimated that around 43% of Russians reportedly [obtain movies](#) and TV shows illegally. “It means that about 62 million people in Russia have the potential to be targeted by our cyber action,” the project founders said.

The risk of telling the truth

Telling the truth in Russia is dangerous. The Kremlin has labeled Russian opposition journalists and celebrities “foreign agents,” forcing them to leave the country. Independent foreign media are also banned in Russia.

Those who oppose the Kremlin’s disinformation narrative [can be fined](#) up to \$45,000 or imprisoned for up to 15 years.

The developers of Torrents of Truth have not yet received threats from the Russians, because the name of the project does not appear in the video that the Russians download on torrents.

Around the same time the project was launched, however, hackers leaked Biriukov’s personal data, including his phone number and passport data, and published it on the Telegram messaging app.

“The Russians started threatening me online and continue to do so because I tell the truth about the war,” Biriukov said. He does not know whether these threats are related to his involvement in the project or his other activities. Biriukov is a well-known person abroad – he’s often invited to speak on foreign television about the war in Ukraine and Russian propaganda.

The threats did not frighten Biriukov, he insists. He said Torrents of Truth will continue its cyber campaign until the war ends or the Russians stop stealing content.

In his opinion, if other hacktivists continue their information attacks, sooner or later they will give results. “This is also propaganda,” he said. “If you keep repeating your message, eventually people will start to think that maybe something in their country is wrong and that what we are telling them is true.”

HEADLINE	11/15 'Tracers in the dark' cryptocurrency future
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/irs-criminal-investigations-cryptocurrency/
GIST	<p>In “Tracers in the Dark: The Global Hunt for the Crime Lords of Cryptocurrency,” Wired journalist Andy Greenberg traces the evolution of bitcoin from its utopian origins to its role underpinning global cybercrime. It’s a pivotal story of the internet, the dark web and policing in the Digital Age. The book demonstrates in gripping, and sometimes thrilling detail, how law enforcement agencies such as the IRS Criminal Investigations unit have harnessed powerful emerging technology to trace cryptocurrency, which once seemed anonymous, right to the doorsteps of some of the world’s most wanted criminals.</p> <p>He also highlights concerns from critics who worry that cryptocurrency tracing technology could be poised to threaten those who seek safety and financial freedom, such as dissidents and those fundraising for war efforts in Ukraine. But mostly this is a story of how police are using technology in their favor, busting Silk Road successor AlphaBay or arresting more than 300 child abuse perpetrators. Told through interviews with academics, technologists and law enforcement agents, “Tracers in The Dark” raises essential questions about the future of cryptocurrency.</p> <p>CyberScoop spoke with Greenberg about the book, released on Tuesday. This conversation has been edited for clarity and length.</p> <p>The Justice Department recently announced the seizure of \$3.36 billion worth of cryptocurrency connected to the Silk Road. I have to admit, I was immediately trying to figure out if James Zhong, the person in this case, was one of the unnamed actors that you wrote about in the book. Were you aware of this case when writing the book? What do you make of its significance?</p> <p>I also was scrambling yesterday to figure out if this was a story that I told in the book because initially I thought James Zhong was “Individual X”, this unnamed person who forfeited 70,000 bitcoins he had stolen from the Silk Road to the Department of Justice in an IRS Criminal Investigation case in 2020. It was only after I reached out to some sources on background that I realized no, this is a different guy. Another hacker essentially had exploited probably the same vulnerability in the Silk Road and this time stole 50,000 Bitcoins — which by the time he forfeited them in late 2021 were worth even more than Individual X’s coins.</p> <p>I mean, you can argue about which of these is the third or second or first biggest seizure of all time. But it’s just remarkable that IRS criminal investigations pulled off this massive seizure and then went on a few months after that to break their own record by seizing \$3.6 billion in Bitcoin from this “Bonnie and Clyde” alleged money laundering couple in New York, who are accused of receiving that money from a hack of the BitFinex exchange.</p> <p>What it all points to is that this golden age of cryptocurrency tracing that has led to record-breaking cybercriminal busts and record-breaking financial seizures is still well underway. Those records are still being broken, even now. It just shows the power of this new forensic technique and the cases that it can break.</p> <p>You tell the story of how technologists discovered cryptocurrency isn’t untraceable through two lenses: Sarah Meiklejohn, who’s a lifelong academic, and Michael Gronager, the co-founder of Chainalysis, a billion-dollar company whose technology plays a key role in some of the book’s investigations. Without giving away the ending of the book, it seems like both reach different conclusions about the technology they’ve created. Why was it important to tell kind of those two parallel stories and what were you hoping to accomplish?</p> <p>I told the story of Sarah Meiklejohn because she really is the inventor of so many techniques that have changed the world’s perception of bitcoin traceability and cryptocurrency privacy in general. I intended her character in the book to kind of be the conscience of the story. I didn’t want this book to be merely cheerleading for law enforcement or telling “cops and robbers” tales that make financial surveillance seem like an unalloyed good. And Sara Meiklejohn, I think, shares this kind of ambivalence. You know, she invented many of these tracing techniques and publicized them but intended her research to be almost like a public service announcement and never really wanted to be one of the cats in this cat-and-mouse game.</p>

It seemed important to capture that not everyone agrees that all money should be traceable, or that financial privacy is a bad thing, or used entirely by criminals.

How did you build trust with law enforcement to give that level of detail and were you surprised at all by what they were willing to share?

I've only rarely told stories from a law enforcement perspective before. I've never been the kind of reporter who is deep inside of the Washington, D.C. agencies getting federal agents to tell me all sorts of untold stories before. But I was lucky here with the correct choice of protagonists, all of whom happened to be underdogs in various ways, and I think were probably a little tired of the fact that their parts of the stories had not been told before.

And the central player I mean in all of that is IRS Criminal Investigations. They did so much of the important work in these crypto-tracing cases and continue to. They're treated like these pencil-pushing accountants when in fact they are a real law enforcement agency within IRS — they carry guns, make arrests and travel around the world to capture the biggest financial criminals. And yet I had barely heard of them before embarking on this story.

Similarly, the AlphaBay case, which would become the biggest dark web bust of all time, began at the Fresno office of the Department of Justice. It's not the Southern District of New York or Washington, D.C. — it's not where you expect cases like this to originate.

Given the [rise of ransomware](#) and some of the obstacles it has posed, do you think the golden age of cryptocurrency tracing you described in your book is over and if not, what do you think is next?

Well, it's clear from the Zhong case that this golden age of cryptocurrency tracing is not over. There are still cases coming to light, often based on evidence trapped in the blockchain from years ago that is still being excavated and exploited by law enforcement. It's clear that these kinds of cases will continue to unfold for years.

But I do think that there are limits to what can be achieved through cryptocurrency tracing, and ransomware is definitely the clearest example of that. The [North Korean cryptocurrency thefts](#) are another example. Sometimes you can follow the money and can identify exactly who stole it or who received the extortion payment. But visibility is not always a silver bullet. The ability to trace ransomware payments for instance just gives us a front-row seat to see how rich Russian cybercriminals are becoming. It doesn't always allow us to do anything about the problem.

Do you think that cryptocurrency still has potential as a privacy-preserving technology or is that out the window at this point?

I have to say that I'm guilty of thinking that bitcoin was a privacy-preserving technology back in 2011 when I wrote the first magazine piece about it and was really focused at the time on its apparent untraceability. I wrote in that [Forbes article](#) that it seemed like you could use this to buy drugs online, which then became one of its first big applications on the Silk Road. So, you know, forgive me if I'm making the same mistake twice but I do now, despite the story of this book, believe that untraceable cryptocurrency is becoming possible again.

To me, [Zcash](#) seems to not offer any loose threads that a crypto tracer can use to follow someone's transactions. Not many people are using Zcash for criminal purposes or really using its private properties at all. For those that do, I haven't yet seen any evidence that the anonymity can be cracked. So, it does seem like, after all this time, there is a completely untraceable cryptocurrency. And the implications of that could still be enormous.

I don't think we've ever actually had true truly untraceable cryptocurrency before, and I don't really know what that will mean for society and for law enforcement.

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HEADLINE	11/16 New RapperBot campaign: DDoS attacks
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/11/warning-new-rapperbot-campaign-aims-to.html

GIST	<p>Cybersecurity researchers have unearthed new samples of malware called RapperBot that are being used to build a botnet capable of launching Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks against game servers.</p> <p>"In fact, it turns out that this campaign is less like RapperBot than an older campaign that appeared in February and then mysteriously disappeared in the middle of April," Fortinet FortiGuard Labs researchers Joie Salvio and Roy Tay said in a Tuesday report.</p> <p>RapperBot, which was first documented by the network security firm in August 2022, is known to exclusively brute-force SSH servers configured to accept password authentication.</p> <p>The nascent malware is heavily inspired by the Mirai botnet, whose source code leaked in October 2016, leading to the rise of several variants.</p> <p>What's notable about the updated version of RapperBot is its ability to perform Telnet brute-force, in addition to supporting DoS attacks using the Generic Routing Encapsulation (GRE) tunneling protocol.</p> <p>"The Telnet brute-forcing code is designed primarily for self-propagation and resembles the old Mirai Satori botnet," the researchers said.</p> <p>This list of hard-coded plaintext credentials, which are default credentials associated with IoT devices, are embedded into the binary as opposed to retrieving it from a command-and-control (C2) server, a behavior that was observed in artifacts detected after July 2022.</p> <p>A successful break-in is followed by reporting the credentials used back to the C2 server and installing the RapperBot payload on the hacked device.</p> <p>Fortinet said the malware is designed to only target appliances that run on ARM, MIPS, PowerPC, SH4, and SPARC architectures, and halt its self-propagation mechanism should they be running on Intel chipsets.</p> <p>What's more, the October 2022 campaign has been found to share overlaps with other operations involving the malware as far back as May 2021, with the Telnet spreader module making its first appearance in August 2021, only to be removed in later samples and reintroduced last month.</p> <p>"Based on the undeniable similarities between this new campaign and the previously reported RapperBot campaign, it is highly likely that they are being operated by a single threat actor or by different threat actors with access to a privately-shared base source code," the researchers concluded.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 China-based campaign phishing domains
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/chinabased-campaign-42000-phishing/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have uncovered a sophisticated phishing campaign using tens of thousands of malicious domains to spread malware and generate advertising revenue.</p> <p>Dubbed "Fangxiao," the group directs unsuspecting users to the domains via WhatsApp messages telling them they've won a prize, according to security vendor Cvijax.</p> <p>The phishing site landing pages apparently impersonate hundreds of well-known brands including Emirates, Unilever, Coca-Cola, McDonald's and Knorr.</p> <p>The victims will be redirected to advertising sites, which Fangxiao generates money from, en route to a fake survey where it's claimed they can win a prize. In some cases a malware download will be triggered during this process.</p>

Return to Top	<p>“Victims are then redirected to a main survey domain. When they click the link, they are sent through a series of advertising sites to one of a set of constantly changing destinations,” Cyjax explained in a blog post.</p> <p>“A click on the ‘Complete registration’ button with an Android user-agent will sometimes result in a download of the Triada malware. As victims are invested in the scam, keen to get their ‘reward,’ and the site tells them to download the app, this has likely resulted in a significant number of infections.”</p> <p>This appears to be a complex and constantly evolving money-making exercise. Its operators have used other lures in the past, including COVID-19 themes, according to Cyjax.</p> <p>The 42,000 domains registered by the group date back to 2019 and “continue to scale.” Infrastructure is protected behind Cloudflare and domain names are changed “regularly and quickly.” On a single day in October, the group used over 300 new unique domains.</p> <p>Cyjax attributed the source of the scam campaign to China after de-anonymizing some of the domains and bypassing Cloudflare restrictions.</p> <p>“We were then able to identify the IP address hosting a Fangxiao site that had been online since at least 2020. Browsing to this service showed us a page written in Mandarin,” the vendor claimed.</p> <p>“In addition, analysis of the Fangxiao TLS certificates provided an interesting insight into the behavior of the group, further backing up our conviction that it is based in China. However, its use of WhatsApp implies targeting outside of China as the messaging service is banned by China’s Communist Party.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 LockBit still most prolific ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/lockbit-remains-most-prolific/
GIST	<p>The infamous LockBit ransomware variant remained the most widespread in the third quarter of 2022, accounting for over a fifth (22%) of detections, according to a new report from Trellix.</p> <p>The threat intelligence vendor analyzed proprietary data from its sensor network, open source intelligence and investigations by the Trellix Advanced Research Center to compile <i>The Threat Report: Fall 2022</i>.</p> <p>It revealed that Lockbit and Phobos were the most common ransomware families during Q3 2022. Lockbit was recently assessed by Deep Instinct to be the most prolific variant of 2022 so far.</p> <p>“At the end of Q3 their ‘builder’ was released, and allegedly various groups are already establishing their own RaaS with it,” the report said of LockBit.</p> <p>“Phobos ransomware continues to be active and accounts for 10% of our telemetry hits. Their tactic of selling a complete ransomware kit and avoiding large organizations allows them to stay under the radar.”</p> <p>Germany recorded the highest detections of APT-related activity (29%) and the highest volume of ransomware (27%), while telecoms was the sector most impacted by ransomware, followed by transportation and shipping.</p> <p>The latter accounted for more APT detections than any other vertical and witnessed a 100% increase in ransomware in the US, the report claimed.</p> <p>The most active advanced threat groups during the quarter were the China-linked Mustang Panda, Russia’s APT29 and Pakistan-linked APT36.</p>

	<p>Red team software Cobalt Strike remained a popular tool for threat actors, seen in a third (33%) of observed global ransomware activity and 18% of APT detections in Q3.</p> <p>There was also a reminder in the report of the need for risk-based patch management programs. Trellix observed Microsoft Equation Editor vulnerabilities from several years ago – CVE-2017-11882, CVE-2018-0798, and CVE-2018-0802 – as the most frequently exploited among malicious emails received by customers in the quarter.</p> <p>“We continue to see unrelenting activity out of Russia and other state-sponsored groups,” noted Trellix head of threat intelligence, John Fokker.</p> <p>“This activity, plus a rise in politically motivated hacktivist action and sustained ransomware attacks on healthcare and education systems, signals the need for increased inspection of cyber-threat actors and their methods.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 European experts warn World Cup fans
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/euro-authorities-world-cup-fans/
GIST	<p>European privacy experts have warned FIFA World Cup attendees that their personal data may be at risk if they download two local tracking apps.</p> <p>The two apps in question are contract-tracing software Ehteraz, which football fans may be asked to download if they’re forced to visit healthcare facilities during their stay in Qatar, and official World Cup app Hayya.</p> <p>The latter functions as a fan ID app that may be needed to gain entry into stadiums. However, concerns have been raised that it also tracks device location and network connections, even preventing devices from going into sleep mode.</p> <p>With 1.5 million fans expected to travel to the tiny Gulf state, several European governments have issued advice to mitigate privacy and security concerns.</p> <p>Many, including the Norwegian Data Protection Authority, expressed alarm at the excessive permissions requested by the apps and urged users to take burner phones to the tournament.</p> <p>German data protection agency, BfDI, said that “the data processing of both apps probably goes much further” than their descriptions in the app store indicate.</p> <p>“Among other things, one of the apps collects data on whether and with which number a telephone call is made. This sometimes involves sensitive telecommunications connection data,” it explained.</p> <p>“Among other things, the other app actively prevents the device on which it is installed from going into sleep mode. It is also obvious that the data used by the apps not only remain locally on the device, but are also transmitted to a central server.”</p> <p>The BfDI's French equivalent, CNIL, has also released a checklist for privacy-conscious travellers.</p> <p>The controversial World Cup host nation has been called out for human rights abuses in the past, especially toward the LGBTQ+ community, raising the stakes for those heading to the tournament.</p> <p>Neil Jones, director of cybersecurity evangelism at Egnyte, argued that the data collected by the apps could also be a treasure trove for would-be cyber-criminals.</p> <p>“If you plan to travel to the event, I would strongly recommend the purchase of a burner phone, if the privacy-limiting capabilities cannot be disabled,” he added.</p>

	<p>“If prompted, allow only the minimum permissions for the application to function on your device. Strongly consider limiting other users’ access to view your geographical location. Don’t allow the application to make calls on your behalf or alter your device’s data. Consider deleting event-related applications when the events have concluded.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 NKorea hackers eye Europe organizations
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/north-korean-hackers-target-european-orgs-with-updated-malware/
GIST	<p>North Korean hackers are using a new version of the DTrack backdoor to attack organizations in Europe and Latin America.</p> <p>DTrack is a modular backdoor featuring a keylogger, a screenshot snapper, a browser history retriever, a running processes snooper, an IP address and network connection information snatcher, and more.</p> <p>Apart from spying, it can also run commands to perform file operations, fetch additional payloads, steal files and data, and execute processes on the compromised device.</p> <p>The new malware version doesn't feature many functional or code changes compared to samples analyzed in the past, but it is now deployed far more widely.</p> <p>A wider distribution</p> <p>As Kaspersky explains in a report published today, their telemetry shows DTrack activity in Germany, Brazil, India, Italy, Mexico, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United States.</p> <p>The targeted sectors include government research centers, policy institutes, chemical manufacturers, IT service providers, telecommunication providers, utility service providers, and education.</p> <p>In the new campaign, Kaspersky has seen DTrack distributed using filenames commonly associated with legitimate executables.</p> <p>For example, one sample they shared is distributed under the 'NvContainer.exe' file name, which is the same name as a legitimate NVIDIA file.</p> <p>Kaspersky told BleepingComputer that DTrack continues to be installed by breaching networks using stolen credentials or exploiting Internet-exposed servers, as seen in previous campaigns.</p> <p>When launched, the malware goes through multiple decryption steps before its final payload is loaded via process hollowing into an "explorer.exe" process, running directly from memory.</p> <p>The only differences to past DTrack variants are it now uses API hashing to load libraries and functions instead of obfuscated strings, and that the number of C2 servers has been cut by half to just three.</p> <p>Some of the C2 servers uncovered by Kaspersky are “pinkgoat[.]com”, “purewatertokyo[.]com”, “purplebear[.]com”, and “salmonrabbit[.]com.”</p> <p>DTrack attribution</p> <p>Kaspersky attributes this activity to the North Korean Lazarus hacking group and claims the threat actors use DTrack whenever they see the potential for financial gains.</p> <p>In August 2022, the same researchers linked the backdoor to the North Korean hacking group tracked as 'Andariel,' which deployed Maui ransomware in corporate networks in the U.S. and South Korea.</p>

	In February 2020, Dragos linked DTrack to a North Korean threat group, ' Wassonite ,' which attacked nuclear energy and oil and gas facilities.
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HEADLINE	11/15 Wipermania: malware remains potent threat
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/wipermania-malware-potent-threat-since-shamoon
GIST	<p>Destructive wiper malware has evolved very little since the "Shamoon" virus crippled some 30,000 client and server systems at Saudi Aramco more than 10 years ago. Yet it remains as potent a threat as ever to enterprise organizations, according to a new study.</p> <p>Max Kersten, a malware analyst at Trellix, recently analyzed more than 20 wiper families that threat actors deployed in various attacks since the beginning of this year — i.e., malware that makes files irrecoverable or destroys whole computer systems. He presented a summary of his findings at the Black Hat Middle East & Africa event on Tuesday during a "Wipermania" session.</p> <p>A Comparison of Wipers in the Wild</p> <p>Kersten's analysis included a comparison of the technical aspects of the different wipers in the study, including the parallels and differences between them. For his analysis, Kersten included wipers that threat actors used extensively against Ukrainian targets, especially just before Russia's invasion of the country, as well as more generic wipers in the wild.</p> <p>His analysis showed the evolution of wipers, since Shamoon, is vastly different from other types of malware tools. Where, for example, the malware that threat actors use in espionage campaigns has become increasingly sophisticated and complex over the years, wipers have evolved very little, even though they remain as destructive as ever. A lot of that has to do with how and why threat actors use them, Kersten tells Dark Reading.</p> <p>Unlike spyware and other malware for targeted attacks and cyberespionage, adversaries have little incentive to develop new functionality for concealing wipers on a network once they have managed to sneak it on there in the first place. By definition, wipers work to erase or overwrite data on computers and are therefore noisy and easily spotted once launched.</p> <p>"As the wiper's behavior needn't stay unnoticed per se, there is no real incentive for evolvment," Kersten says. It's usually only when malware needs to remain hidden over a prolonged period of time that threat actors develop advanced techniques and carry out thorough testing before deploying their malware. But wipers needn't be that complex, nor well tested, he notes. For most threat actors using wipers, "the current methods are working and require little to no tweaking, other than the creation of a new wiper to use in a next attack."</p> <p>Kersten found that a wiper can be as simple as a script to remove all files from the disk, or as complex as a multistage piece of malware which modifies the file system and/or boot records. As such, the time for a malware author to develop a new wiper might range from just a few minutes to a significantly longer period for the more complex wipers, he says.</p> <p>A Nuanced Threat</p> <p>Kersten advocates that enterprise security teams keep a few factors in mind when evaluating defenses against wipers. The most important one is to understand the threat actor's goals and objectives. Though wipers and ransomware can both disrupt data availability, ransomware operators tend to be financially motivated, while the goals of an attacker using wiper malware tend to be more nuanced.</p> <p>Kersten's analysis showed, for instance, that activists and threat actors working in support of strategic nation-state interests were the ones who mainly deployed wipers in cyberattacks this year. In many of the attacks, threat actors targeted organizations in Ukraine, particularly in the period just prior to Russia invasion of the country in February.</p>

Examples of wipers that threat actors used in these campaigns included [WhisperGate and HermeticWiper](#), both of which masqueraded as ransomware but actually damaged the Master Boot Record (MBR) on Windows systems and rendered them inoperable.

Other wipers that attackers deployed against targets in Ukraine this year include RURansom, IsaacWiper and [CaddyWiper](#), a tool that Russia's infamous Sandworm group attempted to deploy on Windows systems associated with Ukraine's power grid. In many of these attacks, the threat actors that actually carried them out appear to have sourced the wipers from different authors.

Another factor that security responders need to keep in mind is that wipers don't always delete files from the target system; sometimes wipers can cripple a target system by overwriting files as well. This can make a difference when attempting to recover files following a wiper attack.

"[Deleting a file often leaves the file on the disk](#) as-is while marking the size as free-to-use for new write operations," Kersten wrote in a blog post on his research, released in tandem with his Black Hat talk on Nov. 15. This makes it possible to recover files in many instances, he said.

When a wiper tool corrupts files by overwriting them, the files can be harder to recover. In the blog post, Kersten pointed to the WhisperGate wiper, which corrupted files by repeatedly overwriting the first megabyte of each file with 0xCC. Other wipers like RURansom use a random encryption key for each file while some wipers overwrite files with copies of the malware itself. In such instances, the files can remain unusable.

The main takeaway is that organizations need to prepare for wipers in much the same way as they prepare for ransomware infections, Kersten says. This includes having backups in place for all critical data and testing recovery processes often and at scale.

"Nearly every wiper is able to corrupt a system until the point that either all files are lost or the machine won't function properly anymore.," he notes. "Since wipers are easy to build, attackers can build a new one daily if needed."

So, the focus for organizations be on the adversary's tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) — such as lateral movement — rather than the malware itself.

"It's better to brace for impact [from a wiper attack] when there is none," Kersten says, "than to be struck with full force without prior notice."

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HEADLINE	11/15 Concern: China ability to weaponize TikTok
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/fbi-wray-tells-congress-extremely-concerned-tiktok/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>FBI Director Christopher Wray told Congress on Tuesday he is “extremely concerned” that Beijing could weaponize data collected through TikTok, the wildly popular app owned by the Chinese company ByteDance.</p> <p>Wray said during a House Homeland Security Committee hearing on worldwide threats that application programming interfaces, or APIs, that ByteDance embeds in TikTok are a national security concern since Beijing could use them to “control data collection of millions of users or control the recommendation algorithm, which can be used for influence operations.”</p> <p>In his opening remarks, Wray noted that while America faces cyberthreats from a variety of nations, “China’s fast hacking program is the world’s largest, and they have stolen more of Americans’ personal and business data than every other nation combined.”</p> <p>Wray said the FBI has seen a surge in cybersecurity cases and as the numbers have increased so too has the complexity of the investigations. “We’re investigating over 100 different ransomware variants and</p>

each one of those with scores of victims as well as a whole host of other novel threats posed by both cybercriminals and nation-states alike.”

He said that APIs in TikTok could be harnessed by China to control software on millions of devices, meaning the Chinese government could conceivably technically compromise Americans’ personal devices.

Because Chinese companies are forced to “basically do whatever the Chinese government wants to do in terms of sharing information or [serving as a tool of the Chinese government](#)... that’s plenty of reason by itself to be extremely concerned” about TikTok and the larger threat posed by Chinese cyber aggression, he said.

Chinese cyber operations threaten the economic and national security of all Americans, according to Rep. John Katko, D-NY, the committee’s ranking member and a longtime advocate for cybersecurity issues in Congress. He told the committee that ransomware attacks cost businesses an estimated \$1.2 billion last year.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and National Counterterrorism Center Director Christine Abizaid also testified on Tuesday.

Mayorkas said ransomware attacks targeting hospitals, pipelines, electric grids and water treatment plants have become commonplace.

Such operations “exploit the integrated global cyber ecosystem to sow discord, undermine democracy and erode trust in our institutions,” Mayorkas said. “In particular, China is using its technology to tilt the global playing field to its benefit.”

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HEADLINE	11/16 Scam drug dealers on social media
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3pk57/scam-drug-dealers-social-media
GIST	<p>Drugs dealers are now as common on social media as hashtags and hate. A 2019 DM for Details report by the drugs advocacy think tank Volteface found that 24 percent of young people have seen illegal drugs for sale on platforms like Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook. In 2021, another survey from the drugs education charity Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation found that 58 percent of 18-year-olds had seen narcotics sold online.</p> <p>But how many of these online plugs are legit? On Monday, the drug information organisation Pill Report published a post about a “scamdemic” of fake dealer accounts on social media. (Full disclosure: I create content for PR on a freelance basis, but wasn’t involved with the research for this particular post.) Reddit already abounds with tales of people that have been scammed on Snapchat or Instagram, while a recent Twitter thread from a drugs analyst alluded to the apparently recent influx of spammy psychedelic vendors operating on Elon Musk’s new \$44 billion Lego set. So how does the blag work and who’s getting scammed?</p> <p>Jonny is 20 years old and lives in the Midlands. Like every other scam victim that VICE spoke to, he is speaking anonymously to protect his privacy. “I got followed on Instagram by an account with a couple of thousand followers,” he says. “I followed back. They were fairly active, posting good quality pictures of substances.”</p> <p>After about a month, Jonny decided to message them on Instagram. The subsequent conversation – breezy and genial as demonstrated in screenshots below – transferred to WhatsApp, where Jonny agreed to pay £60 in Bitcoin for five tabs of LSD.</p> <p>Then the deception deepened: “They wanted £20 more for postage, so I sent that.” When the vendor demanded an extra £60 for “delivery insurance” and refundable on receipt of goods, Jonny knew he was being scammed. He blocked the number and took the financial hit with tail wedged between legs.</p>

When approached for comment, a Meta spokesperson said: “The buying and selling of drugs is not allowed on our platform and we work quickly to remove this content when we become aware of it.”

According to a recent report by [UK Finance](#), a trade association for the UK financial services sector, criminals nabbed more than £1.3bn from online cons and scams in the UK during 2021. Of this, £583.2m was lost to authorised push payment fraud (essentially: whenever someone is deceived into making a payment). Online fraud – in all forms - has been blooming like autumnal liberty caps, and this drug-related grift is just one thread in the web helping it to flourish.

Jonny’s experience is emblematic of a classic social media dealer scam. Manish, 38, recounts a similar story of being followed by an Instagram account, with a bio link to a Telegram group which had around 8,000 subscribers. “There were lots of pictures with different types of smoke [cannabis] they supposedly had in stock, with menu options in terms of quality and deals on each.” He “took a punt” and transferred Bitcoin to the dealer’s Revolut account, including a €20 delivery fee.

“He came back an hour later, very apologetic, saying the deal wasn’t big enough for the boss and could I bump up the order to €200 worth – but he would make it worth my while with a bit extra. I reluctantly did so. After that all I got was radio silence and was then immediately blocked from all their Instagram and Telegram accounts.”

Manish had previous experience of buying high quality products online before. “I got complacent and he seemed so genuine,” he says. “I felt so stupid, especially paying up the second lot.”

Pill Report executive director James Morsh says that these scams “have been around for years on all social media platforms. Whilst some advertise the sale of recreational substances, others specialise in [Forex trading](#), [crypto](#), fake driving licenses and other scams. But we noticed a significant increase of these ‘dealer’ accounts over the last two years.”

Reddit has long been a [hub for scammers](#). Cyrillio, an [r/Drugs](#) moderator who keeps the forum ticking over for its 915,000 followers, says: “In conversations with admins, it’s been made clear that more work is being put in to preventing people from being scammed [not just when it comes to drugs, but all [types of fraud targeting Redditors](#)]. Me and other moderators have noticed that people trying to scam others by messaging them and offering to sell drugs are getting banned more quickly and effectively.” When contacted by VICE, Reddit directed us to their [Content Policy](#), which stipulates that the platform cannot be used to solicit or facilitate the sale of drugs.

“A lot of the [fake] accounts are run by the same people,” Morsh says. “They use the same photos and when one person falls for a scam – another account by the same scammer will follow them as they know that person is vulnerable.” He knows of several cases like this and has seen multiple scam accounts redirecting potential victims to a core Telegram group. “These are organised – sophisticated, in their own way.”

Morsh also speculates that many are using software to operate on social media. Andrew Gillard, a moderator of the harm reduction website and forum [Bluelight](#), also says that a lot of the initial messages come from bots. “That message [typically a “hey mate” into your inbox with a menu or Telegram link] will have been sent to many accounts – once it detects a level of activity, a person then takes over. You can tell when this happens very easily because the writing style changes.”

Megan Townsend of Volteface suggests we’re dealing with an evolved version of the fake [“Nigerian prince” email scams](#) that still cram the junk folders of boomers’ Outlook accounts. “It’s transformed for the younger generation who would read that email and know it’s rubbish,” the criminology student says. She also lists TikTok, Discord and Snapchat as fertile grounds for vulnerable, green kids seeking, well, green: “They [the scammers] target places where young people concentrate themselves.”

Chris, a volunteer with multiple drugs-related organisations and speaking under provision of anonymity, tells me that some vendors moved from the darkweb to encrypted messaging services like [Telegram](#) to mitigate the risk of exit scams (see: the 2020 disappearance of marketplace [Empire](#), which ran off with \$30m of vendors' and customers' money), or [authority shutdowns](#) where money in escrow is seized. This is good news for their trusted, drug-savvy clientele. But for some users, it's hard to differentiate between a legit vendor, and scammers accruing new victims with [Twitter keyword](#) searches, or who have just siphoned the followers of established scam Instagram accounts.

"The tricky thing about buying drugs on the internet is that it makes sense for both parties to attempt to screw the other over," says [Patrick Shortis](#), a researcher at the University of Manchester who specialises in darknet markets. "And whilst escrow systems on crypto markets mitigate that problem – [albeit] without perfectly solving it – you don't really have any of those protections in place for Telegram or Instagram." Shortis points out the presence of closed Telegram groups that "vouch" for individual vendors, so the buyer can be more certain that their goods will arrive: "But Telegram is not easy to navigate without practice and finding reliable vendors if you don't know what to look for can be a mess."

Telegram told VICE that it "has actively moderated harmful content on its platform – including the sale of illegal substances. Our moderators proactively monitor public parts of the app as well as accepting user reports that breaches our tests."

So how can you tell a badman from a man with bag? After all, there are some reliable dealers on social media. Genuinely nice and kind people you'd enjoy a continental lager with. One recurring message from the experts is: If a vendor messages you first, then it's a scam. A very well-connected individual we speak to says: "On Telegram, if you found a group by searching and not being added by a friend, it's probably a scam. And if even you are on a big closed Telegram group, don't ask: 'Who's selling X in my area?' Because you will get scammed."

And what about those accounts that randomly follow you on IG, plump with tantalising pictures of every pill and powder imaginable and boasting thousands of followers with screenshots of glowing reviews? "They mean absolutely nothing," says our connect. You heard it here first.

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HEADLINE	11/15 After attacks Australia to 'hack the hackers'
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/11/15/two-enormous-cyberattacks-convince-australia-hack-hackers/
GIST	<p>Australia has had enough. But going on offense against cyberspace tormentors has some downsides.</p> <p>Australia's Cybersecurity Minister Clare O'Neil vowed this weekend to "hack the hackers" after two monumental, back-to-back cyberattacks against Australian telecommunications giant Optus and insurance titan Medibank affected swaths of people.</p> <p>The fallout has included the public exposure of sensitive health data and the theft of information about millions of customers.</p> <p>The stretch of high-profile hacks is comparable to what the United States experienced from late 2020 to mid-2021, when Russian hackers infiltrated federal agencies and tech companies after breaching IT firm SolarWinds and the Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack triggered a fuel panic on the East Coast. The combination of those hacks, among others, prompted more drastic action from the U.S. government, both in the Biden administration and Congress, Glenn Gerstell, former general counsel of the National Security Agency, told me.</p> <p>"In some ways, this is a repeat of the kind of shock that the United States went through," said Gerstell, now a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank. "I think it also reflects maybe a bit of frustration with traditional tools, law enforcement tools and even diplomatic</p>

tools, that are going to be limited — because most of these hackers are located offshore, probably in Russia — against attacks that nation-state-condoned, or state-tolerated at best.”

But going on the offensive and trying to strike back in cyberspace against one’s attackers has its own risks, with rewards that might not prove lasting.

Pros and cons

On the plus side of offensive action, the U.S. has proven capable at times of [clawing back stolen cryptocurrency](#), for instance, and has successfully targeted the servers of a ransomware gang, [as my colleague Ellen Nakashima reported last year](#).

“You’re going to make a statement, obviously, if it takes some infrastructure down,” **Tim Kosiba**, the former chief of the NSA special liaison office in Canberra, Australia, and now CEO of cyber firm Redacted’s Bracket f subsidiary, told me. And it might send more of a message than filing charges against hackers unlikely to ever see the inside of a courtroom, he said.

On the negative side:

- “That sort of gives away your ability to track down and attest where the attack came from,” Kosiba said.
- It requires complete confidence about who’s responsible for the attack to make sure an innocent target isn’t victimized, he said. And it can potentially cause trouble for allies, given the distributed global nature of the internet and the need to sometimes [route attacks through the infrastructure of other nations](#).
- The known, reported cases of U.S. hacking operations against cyber adversaries include operations like the [2018 disruption of the Russian troll farm the Internet Research Agency](#), which doesn’t seem to have [done permanent harm](#). “I don’t see that as anything that amounted to much more than a momentary annoyance, in the grand scheme of things,” **Gavin Wilde**, who has served at the National Security Council and NSA and is now a senior fellow in the Technology and International Affairs Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told me.

U.S. experiences

Notably, the ransomware gang that Australia reportedly believes is responsible for the Medibank hack is REvil, the target of the operation that Ellen reported on last year. At the time, a pair of operations by U.S. Cyber Command and a foreign government at least temporarily “left its leaders too frightened of identification and arrest to stay in business, according to several U.S. officials familiar with the matter,” Ellen reported. Ransomware gangs in general have shown the ability to rapidly regenerate.

The first hacking operation the U.S. government ever acknowledged [came against the Islamic State terrorist group](#) in 2016. NSA and Cyber Command Chief Gen. **Paul Nakasone**, [reflecting on the operation in 2019](#), said that while the group may have still been online, it had to change its operations and was no longer as strong in cyberspace as before.

- “We were seeing an adversary that was able to leverage cyber to raise a tremendous amount of money to proselytize,” he told **NPR**. “We were seeing a series of videos and posts and media products that were high-end. We haven’t seen that recently. ... As ISIS shows their head or shows that ability to act, we’re going to be right there.”

That still means even U.S. Cyber Command is in its “relative infancy as far as offensively capable units,” Wilde said, and any nation should be “pretty circumspect” about sending the signal that retaliatory attacks are capable of being effective against cybercriminals. (Attacks on fellow nation states [might be a different story](#).)

Australia’s experiences

Return to Top	<p>With a population of just under 26 million people, Australia is far smaller than the United States (332 million). So it was a massive impact on the country when the attacks affected 9.7 million Medibank customers and 9.8 million Optus customers, Kosiba said.</p> <p>“I’m pretty familiar with their capabilities, and they have great capabilities,” he said. Australia has also benefited from working closely with the United States as part of the “Five Eyes” intelligence partnership, he said. And a recent study ranked Australia as No. 5 in cyber power, with the United States at the top of the list.</p> <p>That said, Australia is going up against the same adversaries in cyberspace that the United States has struggled to contend with, only Australia’s doing it with a far smaller cyber force, Gerstell said. That means going on offense is “just part of the solution,” he said, and must be paired with partnering with law enforcement and improved defense, something Australia seems to realize.</p> <p>Both Australia and the United States also appear to recognize that they need to do more, Kosiba said.</p> <p>“The big question is, are we at the stage where you should impose greater costs to the adversary?” he asked. “Obviously, it sounds like the Australians believe that ... there needs to be more cost imposed on these types of ransomware gangs.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Treasury: crypto ‘risky, even dangerous’
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ftx-collapse-janet-yellen-crypto-economy-inflation-diesel-shortage-ev-batteries-china/
GIST	<p>Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has told CBS News that the spectacular collapse of cryptocurrency exchange FTX, which sent shockwaves through the crypto world last week with its bankruptcy filing, should serve as a warning to Americans about investing their money in "extremely risky" financial products traded in a space lacking "appropriate supervision and regulation."</p> <p>FTX, one of the world's largest cryptocurrency exchanges, crumbled in the space of only about one week, and both the company and its former CEO, Sam Bankman-Fried, are now being investigated in the U.S. and other nations for possible securities violations. While the fallout from FTX's collapse has largely been limited to the crypto finance markets, Yellen joined a rising chorus of experts and officials around the world suggesting the digital currency industry should face more regulation.</p> <p>"I think this is a space where investors and consumers should really be very careful," Yellen told CBS News correspondent Nancy Cordes in a wide-ranging interview in Bali, where the Treasury Secretary was attending the G20 summit alongside President Biden.</p> <p>"We have very strong investor and consumer protection laws for most of our financial markets, but in some ways the crypto space has inadequate regulation."</p> <p>Yellen said the Biden administration had highlighted "regulatory holes that need to be filled for this to be a space where Americans can feel safe doing business," and blamed the "absence of appropriate supervision and regulation" for the FTX collapse.</p> <p>Yellen stressed that she was not in a position to offer Americans specific advice on how they should or should not invest their money, but she called cryptocurrencies "extremely risky assets, and even dangerous in some ways," and urged people to "be extremely careful about their activities in this space."</p> <p>FTX's creditors will be first in line to receive whatever assets a bankruptcy judge deems appropriate to distribute as the company seeks to restructure as part of its Chapter 11 filing. Investors in the Bahamas-based company, which had raised some \$2 billion in venture capital, will be second in line. That means</p>

	<p>FTX account holders, who used the platform to trade bitcoin, solana and other digital currencies, may have to wait years to get their money back – if they ever do.</p> <p>A "strong, resilient economy" vs inflation</p> <p>The Treasury chief described the U.S. economy overall as strong and resilient and said she expected inflation to ease over the coming year with plenty of jobs on offer for Americans, but she warned that the global picture remained "uncertain."</p> <p>"Many countries are really suffering from high energy and food prices, and we have those strains ourselves, but we have a strong, resilient economy," Yellen told Cordes, calling the U.S. labor market "exceptionally strong."</p>
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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	11/16 Terror threat to Qatar World Cup?
SOURCE	https://newsable.asianetnews.com/sports/football-terror-threat-to-qatar-world-cup-2022-pro-isis-telegram-channel-calls-for-biological-strike-snt-rifpmt
GIST	<p>With just four days left for the FIFA World Cup 2022 to get underway in Qatar, concerns have been raised over the safety and security of travelling fans and teams after reports pointed out that supporters of Islamic State (ISIS) have called for 'violent' and 'biological' attacks in the Gulf nation.</p> <p>Islamic State supporters have been reportedly using the messaging app Telegram as a platform to communicate cryptic messages outlining specific assault plans. Their strategy is to reportedly prepare attacks on the competition by picking on certain countries, including Western teams, that have attempted or successfully contributed to the fight against the Islamic State.</p> <p>According to MEMRI -Jihad & Terrorism Threat Monitor, the pro-Islamic State Telegram channel recently called the upcoming World Cup a 'golden opportunity' for ISIS supporters to carry out attacks in retaliation against the nations of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, as many of their citizens will travel to Qatar to support their respective football teams.</p> <p>"The World Cup in Qatar is a golden opportunity for 'fans' [ISIS supporters] since there will be many goals [targets] because many of the countries of the Global Coalition are participating in it. Try to be one of participants in the World Cup and one of the goal scorers," wrote the channel in a November 7 post in Arabic.</p> <p>In a subsequent post, the pro-ISIS Telegram channel added, "The clean-up campaigns are ongoing. Be a part of the World Cup in Qatar and score your goals. The goal is open."</p> <p>The channel also published two infographics, one of which listed the nations that are a part of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and the other of which displayed the national teams that will compete in the upcoming World Cup. "You have the freedom to choose who to support," the pro-ISIS Telegram channel commented sarcastically.</p> <p>The channel went on to say in a later post that "supporting Belgium, France, and Canada has a special taste," thus suggesting that supporters should focus their efforts on fan bases from these Western nations.</p> <p>Additionally, the pro-ISIS Telegram channel published guidelines for launching attacks during the World Cup 2022, which it euphemistically referred to as "a humanitarian operation to clean-up Qatar."</p> <p>It urged supporters to see the act of 'cleaning' as not 'limited to using weapons only', in an indication that Islamic State sympathisers urge members of the terror group to consider a biological attack in Qatar during the high-profile football tournament.</p>

The Telegram channel urged people to put some (viruses) in the food or beverages of people travelling from Western countries with a 'sprayer to spread the tasty perfume'. Stating that the important thing is to achieve the 'goal' of coming back in the form of a 'coffin', it called for supporters to do whatever they are capable of.

The channel promoted an account that it said would give substances to people who want them, further inciting supporters to carry out biological attacks.

In the month-long tournament, 32 footballing nations are fighting for the coveted trophy in Qatar, and the country is expecting an unprecedented 1.2 million visitors. Since the decision to award the hosting rights to the Middle Eastern country was taken in 2010, it has been marred by controversies, including allegations of workers' human rights abuse, corruption and ideology concerning the illegality of homosexuality. And now, the terror threat looms large in the country as well.

Former FIFA President Sepp Blatter recently admitted that it was a "mistake" to award the World Cup to Qatar, a country that is home to just 2.9 million residents.

Human rights organisations urged travellers to cancel their reservations after The Guardian reported in February 2021 that over 6,500 migrant workers have perished while working on stadium and other tournament-related projects since the decision was made.

It remains to be seen if security will be beefed up in Qatar in response to the threat of a possible terror strike.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Arsonist fled to avoid long prison; it worked
SOURCE	https://www.opb.org/article/2022/11/15/environmental-arsonist-dibee-fled-country-to-avoid-lengthy-prison-sentence-it-worked/
GIST	<p>Joseph Dibee, former international fugitive and supporter of the Earth Liberation Front and the Animal Liberation Front, got a shorter sentence than his co-defendants, raising questions about how the federal government prosecutes what it considers domestic terrorism</p> <p>When Joseph Dibee and 12 other co-defendants were indicted in 2006 for numerous arsons, including the burning of a slaughterhouse in Central Oregon, the U.S. Department of Justice said they were responsible for acts of domestic terrorism. Dibee, 54, fled the country to avoid trial and lived as a fugitive until the federal government apprehended him in Cuba in 2018.</p> <p>Dibee's crimes were not forgotten. Federal agents spent years tracking him down.</p> <p>But he was sentenced this month to time served — two and a half years — and 1,000 hours of community service. He may also have to help pay the \$1.3 million levied in restitution for harm caused. There was no terrorism enhancement added to his sentence. Nor was it extended because he fled the country to avoid arrest.</p> <p>The journey from the government considering Dibee's crimes among the worst criminal acts — terrorism — to a sentence that some now see as a mere slap on the wrist is due to many factors. Perhaps the most significant one of all is just time.</p> <p>“Dragging things out as long as possible, having delay and time pass almost always benefits my clients,” said Matt Schindler, Dibee's defense attorney. “The truth of these situations is however hurt you were by something two weeks ago, you're less hurt by it now. It's just a natural human consequence.”</p> <p>It's not a consequence everyone is satisfied with.</p>

Federal prosecutors had asked the judge overseeing the case to impose a seven-year, three-month prison term.

“Setting fires to help the environment is inherently an absurd concept,” the prosecutors noted in their sentencing memo. “But the dangerousness and foolishness of Mr. Dabee’s conduct has only become clearer with time.”

The way the courts treat Dabee’s particular brand of crime has changed too.

Federal prosecutors have long noted the Earth Liberation Front and the Animal Liberation Front caused more than \$45 million in fire damage to businesses and government buildings between 1995 and 2001. At one point, top counterterrorism officials even considered the groups among the top domestic terror threat facing the country.

Also true: No one was killed in the arsons set by Dabee and his co-defendants. Historically, groups on the far-left are significantly less deadly than groups on the far right, such as white supremacists.

“Left-wing terrorism has been overpromoted,” Brian Levin, director at the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino. “Not saying it doesn’t happen, but we saw the FBI calling this about a decade and a half ago the biggest terror threat ... and it didn’t rise to that in terms of severity level.”

Still, some in law enforcement are disappointed by what they see as Dabee getting off with a light sentence.

“To see him not have to serve any additional time in what he did is unfortunate; it sends the wrong message,” said Billy Williams, who was Oregon’s U.S. Attorney in 2018 when Dabee was arrested by the FBI in Cuba and flown in a government jet to Portland.

“Now in effect the message is, if you can avoid detection for as long as possible, you have a better chance at not being held as responsible as your co-defendants and that’s the wrong message to send.”

The U.S. Attorney’s Office declined to comment following Dabee’s sentencing. Federal prosecutors also did not send out a news release after the hearing as it typically would on a significant national security case where the government wanted to call attention to the result.

For his part, Dabee said in an interview with OPB that he was sorry for his action and feels he did suffer.

“The arson — singular — wasn’t necessarily the appropriate way to address the situation,” Dabee said. “It definitely had a lot of negative consequences, both for me and the environmental movement as a whole.”

Dabee didn’t feel it was fair he had to plead guilty to conspiracy to commit arson in California. But federal conspiracy charges allow prosecutors to hold defendants responsible for one another’s conduct. And while Dabee didn’t light the fire in California — prosecutors even acknowledged in court documents that he argued against it at one point — Dabee knew what others were planning “because his co-conspirators were building the incendiary devices at his house,” the Justice Department stated in court documents.

Dabee said he thought federal law enforcement was “overzealous” in its investigation. And he believes he’s paid a heavy price, including the consequences of being labeled a federal felon for the rest of his life.

When Dabee fled in December 2005, he left family behind in Seattle and gave up his job at Microsoft. He lived in Syria and Russia and traveled to Ecuador; places he said he worked as an engineer on environmental or renewable energy projects.

“To some extent I wouldn’t have all these other experiences and I did some pretty interesting stuff in Syria and I met some pretty wonderful people in Russia, and I got some really interesting and exciting work and time in Ecuador,” he said.

Still, Dibee alleged he was tortured by Cuban authorities prior to the FBI taking him into custody. After his arrest, Dibee got COVID-19 and suffered a broken jaw after another person in custody assaulted him at Multnomah County’s Inverness Jail. Later, Dibee was released to home detention in Seattle where he cared for his elderly father, who has dementia.

“I used to have a good career, I used to have respect in the community and I was well set up to retire and now I have essentially nothing,” Dibee told OPB, calling his prosecution a “political witch hunt.”

Typically, being an international fugitive, living in countries that have regularly refused extradition requests or don’t have diplomatic relations with the United States, would be considered an aggravating factor at sentencing, according to Levin. Dibee’s sentence is the shortest of the 11 co-defendants who pleaded guilty years before him. Some were sentenced to as many as 13 years in prison.

“If we were to transport all those people from back then to now, the results would be different, the language would be different and I think you’d end up with a situation where there was less of this bullshit boogie man,” Schindler, Dibee’s lawyer, said.

Dibee said he has not kept in touch with his co-defendants.

“Some of them I don’t wish ill on,” Dibee said of his co-defendants, “but most of them are just vermin, they’re vermin.”

Judge Aiken, who has overseen the case since 2006, acknowledged during Dibee’s sentencing hearing in Eugene that the case was unusual because it “straddles time.”

“There’s no doubt that these acts were violent and meant to intimidate and create fear,” Aiken said. She noted that years ago she determined a terrorism enhancement under the sentencing guidelines applied to some defendants. That made it harder to have flexibility in sentencing, she noted.

“Thirty years ago, at the time these crimes were committed was very different — yet similar to today — where people are taking decisions into their own hands and acting out in ways that are both criminal and inappropriate and dangerous,” Aiken said. “You have demonstrated that you learned lessons — although belatedly.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 DOJ charges man: support for ISIS
SOURCE	https://www.courthousenews.com/michigan-man-accused-of-helping-islamic-state-for-six-years/
GIST	<p>DETROIT (CN) — A Michigan man has been federally charged with attempting to provide support for the Islamic State terrorist group in Iraq and Syria and possessing a destructive device, the Department of Justice announced Tuesday.</p> <p>In an indictment filed in early October and unsealed Tuesday in the Eastern District of Michigan, Aws Mohammed Naser was charged with providing material support to terrorists and being a felon in possession of a destructive device.</p> <p>Few details of Naser’s conduct were revealed in the indictment or a Justice Department press release, but Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin Mulcahy wrote in the charging document that between December 2011 and October 2017, Naser attempted to provide resources, including himself, to the Islamic State knowing that it was a terrorist organization.</p>

The 34-year-old from the Detroit suburb of Westland also allegedly possessed a destructive device – a broad category that includes several types of firearm as well as explosive devices – in October 2017, despite a prior felony conviction that prohibited him from doing so.

Details on Naser’s background are also sparse, but Michigan court records show he was [convicted](#) in 2014 for an armed robbery committed early in 2013.

Naser appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Anthony Patti for a brief hearing early Tuesday afternoon and entered a not-guilty plea. He is represented by federal public defender Benton Martin.

The Justice Department press release noted that if convicted, Naser faces up to 20 years in prison on the terrorism charge and up to 15 years on the destructive-device charge. Prosecutors also noted that the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force is investigating the case.

“Today’s indictment serves to remind others what can happen if they attempt to provide assistance to a foreign terrorist organization,” James A. Tarasca, special agent in charge of the FBI’s Detroit Field Office, said while announcing the charges.

The terrorist group is known variously as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, of Iraq and al-Sham, of Iraq and the Levant, or by the English abbreviations IS, ISIS and ISIL and the Arabic abbreviation Daesh. Founded in 1999, the extremist Sunni group allied with al-Qaida during the U.S.’s 2003 invasion of Iraq before splintering to form its own self-proclaimed caliphate centered in portions of Iraq and Syria in 2014.

While a coalition of opponents led by the U.S. has since reduced the group’s hold over territory in that region, its affiliates have seized territory in Nigeria and Mozambique.

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HEADLINE	11/15 FBI: 2,700 domestic terror investigations
SOURCE	https://www.bostonherald.com/2022/11/15/fbi-conducting-2700-domestic-terrorism-investigations-wray-tells-congress/
GIST	<p>The FBI is conducting twice as many investigations into threats of domestic terrorism now than it was at the start of 2020 amid a historically deadly time for law enforcement, Director Christopher Wray told a congressional committee.</p> <p>“The top domestic terrorism threat we face continues to be from domestic violent extremists we categorize as racially or ethnically motivated extremists and anti-government or anti-authority violent extremists,” Wray said Tuesday. “The number of FBI domestic terrorism investigations has more than doubled since the spring of 2020, and as of the end of fiscal year 2022, the FBI was conducting approximately 2,700 domestic terrorism investigations.”</p> <p>Wray, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, in an appearance before the House Homeland Security Committee, said that while most acts of violence in recent years have come from those espousing white supremacist ideologies, 2020 saw an uptick in acts committed by what law enforcement categorize as “militia violent extremists.”</p> <p>Wray then went on to explain from whence hundreds of those investigations stem.</p> <p>“We are approaching the two-year anniversary of the January 6 siege of the U.S. Capitol, which has led to unprecedented efforts by the Department of Justice, including the FBI, to investigate and hold accountable all who engaged in violence, destruction of property, and other criminal activity on that day. To date, the Department has arrested and charged more than 880 individuals who took part in the Capitol siege,” he said.</p>

	<p>Committee Chairman Rep. Bennie Thompson, who also chairs the committee investigating the attack on the Capitol, in his opening statement said that though international terrorism remains a concern to the committee, he too sees threats from inside U.S. borders as the primary concern of law enforcement.</p> <p>“Domestic violence extremists now pose the greatest threat to our homeland,” the Louisiana congressman said.</p> <p>International terrorism, Wray acknowledged, continues to be a threat to American security, but there too the dangers comes from inside the country and not from without.</p> <p>“Homegrown violent extremists are people located and radicalized to violence primarily in the United States, who are not receiving individualized direction from foreign terrorists organizations but are inspired by (them),” he said.</p> <p>Last year was the deadliest for law enforcement since 9/11, Wray told members of congress.</p> <p>“I call every time an officer is shot and killed,” Wray said. “I’ve made over 200 of those calls. Often it’s more than one a week. Each one of those officers killed leaves a family behind.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 DHS blocked domestic threats research?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/11/15/dhs-mayorkas-domestic-violent-extremism/
GIST	<p>As bloody, hate-fueled attacks rose in 2019, Homeland Security officials pledged to step up their response to domestic terrorism, funding in-depth research that would help them understand the scale of the problem.</p> <p>“Accurate nationwide statistics will better position DHS to protect communities from these threats,” the department said in a strategy report.</p> <p>More than two years later, that data collection has not begun, and \$10 million languishes unused because of internal disputes over privacy protocols, according to researchers and an official of the Department of Homeland Security.</p> <p>Academics who received DHS contracts say their projects to study violent attacks and extremist movements have been delayed, some effectively scrapped, because of an endless loop of privacy concerns that typically would not apply to work based on open-source records — unclassified materials such as news reports. In interviews, researchers described the roadblocks they have faced as “crazytown,” “mind-boggling” and “beyond logic.”</p> <p>Their accounts were confirmed by a DHS official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to freely describe a sensitive internal debate. The official said around 20 research projects funded by Homeland Security faced varying degrees of delays because of rulings by the DHS’s Privacy Office that deemed them high-risk even after researchers repeatedly explained that the information they intended to use was widely available to the public. At least \$2 million of funding has been returned unused; \$10 million more is essentially frozen unless privacy officers approve the research.</p> <p>After so many months of paralysis, the official said, DHS relations with top terrorism scholars have soured, and DHS leaders are left with a gap in data — just as national attention is again focused on political violence, which is at the root of the ongoing trials in the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, the recent assault of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s husband, Paul Pelosi, and far-right threats around the midterm elections.</p> <p>Those issues are likely to come up this week as Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas makes public appearances to address the government’s response to violent extremism, a national security priority for the Biden administration. In June 2021, the need for more research was spelled out</p>

in the country's first [national strategy](#) for countering domestic terrorism, which noted that understanding the threat "requires facilitating a systematic provision of information and data."

So far, that information-gathering work has not been carried out.

"Right now, if the secretary of Homeland Security turns to us and says, 'Last year, how many serious attacks based on ideology or grievance happened?' we can't answer those fundamental questions," the DHS official said. "We don't know."

Homeland Security spokespeople did not respond to requests for comment.

Within the department, the official speaking anonymously said, one view is that privacy officers are trying to shield Mayorkas from potentially controversial research at a time when federal agencies are criticized by both major political parties for their response to political violence. Republicans in Congress have portrayed the effort to investigate domestic terrorism as a thought-police exercise that infringes on First Amendment rights. Some Democrats, too, have expressed wariness of federal overreach, citing the civil liberties violations of the war-on-terror years.

DHS is already under scrutiny because of the [rollback of plans](#) to fight disinformation and for reports that authorities [sought dossiers](#) on protesters in Portland, Ore. — indications of how easily counterterrorism work can be politicized.

The academic researchers on contract with DHS said they share those concerns, stressing that the [recent transgressions](#) make it awkward to push back on privacy oversight. But the researchers say that in long Zoom meetings and months of correspondence with DHS, they have explained that their work is different: It is governed by a code of ethics, reviewed by their universities and built from data that is already available to the public. The contracts come from the innovation-focused Science and Technology Directorate inside DHS, not the enforcement side. Nevertheless, researchers said, DHS privacy officers have ruled that collecting and analyzing public information is too risky.

"It's going to be equally or more controversial that we're doing nothing. That we're not doing our jobs: understanding these problems, how to describe them, or how to respond to them," the DHS official said. In one example of a stalled project, a University of Maryland [terrorism research team](#) was awarded \$2.6 million in September 2020 to build a database of nationwide attacks based on publicly available information — essentially, a digital repository of newspaper clippings. Researchers would then analyze the data to determine trends such as methods of attack or motivations for attacks.

That project was deemed by DHS privacy officers to be a "high risk" information-gathering effort, and the 14-month contract ran out in January without a scrap of data collected, according to lead researcher Erin Miller, who provided corroborating emails from DHS. In September, the university returned \$1.25 million of unused funds to DHS, Miller said. Her team has another contract proposal pending and expects to hit the same wall.

"We're months into this now, and I'm sort of trying to get a sense, like, is this real?" Miller said. "Is this a genuine concern about privacy or does someone just not want this research to happen?"

Miller is a veteran researcher who for years has overseen the [Global Terrorism Database](#), or GTD, a vast archive now funded by the Defense Department. Her proposal to Homeland Security was a U.S.-focused spinoff of the GTD that would take details from public reports of attacks and analyze them across various categories: motivation, targets, deaths, injuries, weapons, and so on.

"It's not a wild-goose chase in terms of trying to track down information on random individuals," Miller said. "Everything we collect data on has to have some nexus to violence, a violent attack."

Miller said the information would be a guide for policymakers studying the evolving threat of ideologically motivated violence, and could be useful in the training of law enforcement agencies and

emergency medical workers. The response from DHS privacy officers, Miller said, was that public news articles might contain names of people participating in activities protected by the First Amendment.

Miller said she was stunned; not only was the information public, but there had been no plans to include source material in the data collection.

“It’s literally the news,” Miller said. “We’re using the news. It’s the opposite of private.”

On Nov. 1, a month after Miller briefed privacy officials on her methodology, she received a message from DHS that once again blocked the work: “Our subject matter experts have reaffirmed their stance that there is a high risk of unauthorized access to or disclosure of sensitive information.”

The message, Miller said, was that her project is “basically dead.”

“It’s very difficult at this point to interpret what is happening as something other than ‘DHS as an entity doesn’t want this to move forward,’ ” Miller said.

Mayorkas [has said](#) “domestic violent extremism poses the most lethal and persistent terrorism-related threat to our country today,” an assessment that still stands, he told a congressional hearing Tuesday. The DHS official and researchers said they were unsure whether Mayorkas is aware that his privacy officers are seen as hampering an effort the department has called a priority.

The lack of reliable data on violent-extremist threats has persisted for years despite demands from Congress and advocacy groups for improvement. Under the Trump administration, Homeland Security released a [counterterrorism report](#) that acknowledged a growing threat, but could not offer hard numbers on attacks because “current national-level statistics on terrorism and targeted violence in all its forms are not comprehensive.”

To fill that information gap, DHS pledged to “prioritize resources toward the collection of this data” with the help of universities and nongovernmental organizations. The overture was welcomed by researchers who had watched with alarm as the Trump administration infused its hard-right politics into the counterterrorism effort, insisting on portraying far-left “antifa” militants as equal to the exponentially deadlier far right.

“It’s so, so important to be able to have public, transparent, independent and objective numbers and research about this stuff because that’s what prevents people with a political agenda from saying, ‘It’s all antifa!’ or ‘It’s all Nazis!’ ” the DHS official said. “It allows people to say, ‘We know what it is because we’ve seen the trends.’ ”

Another long-stalled project is led by [John Horgan](#), a professor and the director of the Violent Extremism Research Group at Georgia State University. In 2019, a few months after [an attack in Canada](#) drew attention to misogynistic “incel” communities, Horgan asked DHS officials whether they were researching the movement. They were not, so they invited Horgan to apply to do so. He was awarded a \$125,000 contract for a one-year study that would offer “a baseline view” of incels — the term is shorthand for “involuntary celibates” — and their violent subset.

“I’m not in the business of trying to collect identities or trying to expose people,” Horgan said. “I’m interested in the message, the content: What are they saying? What are the ways in which violent incels are normalizing and routinizing the subjugation of women?”

The project start date was in September 2020. About a month later, Horgan recalled, his DHS contacts called to say, “Hold on a sec, we have to put the brakes on” because the Privacy Office had questions. Horgan said that such reviews are normal and are welcomed as a safeguard.

“There may be a perception that we’re trying to work around privacy issues,” he said. “On the contrary, we don’t do this research unless there are privacy concerns in there.”

	<p>But in this case, Horgan said, the questions stretched on and on. For more than two years, Horgan has been in “bureaucratic limbo with the privacy folks.” His research has not begun, but he remains under contract and regularly sends DHS emails seeking to resolve the situation.</p> <p>“It just goes into a black hole and nothing happens. In two or three months I get a response back saying, ‘Okay, privacy has additional concerns,’ ” Horgan said. “It got to the point where I said to my DHS contacts: This is just not worth this. I came here with a very serious intention to get some research done on what I see as a potential emerging threat.”</p> <p>In a last-ditch effort to convince the privacy holdouts, Horgan put together a detailed primer that he presented to officials over the summer. He said he tried to make the basics crystal clear, “explaining research, privacy and ethics as you would to a 10-year-old.” He walked the officials through the process, noting that the work involved no human subjects, no automated data-scraping tools, no third parties, no raw-data dumps.</p> <p>“That was back in August,” Horgan said. “I have heard nothing.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Militants ambush police patrol NW Pakistan
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/militants-ambush-police-patrol-kill-nw-pakistan-93389220
GIST	<p>PESHAWAR, Pakistan -- Armed militants ambushed and killed all six people in a police vehicle in northwestern Pakistan, officials said Wednesday.</p> <p>Police officer Rab Nawaz Khan said the morning attack in the Dadewala area of Lakki Marwat district came during a routine patrol in a suburban area. The attackers escaped on motorcycles.</p> <p>Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. Islamic militants had been involved in previous attacks on security forces.</p> <p>Mohammad Khurasani, who said he is a spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban, formally known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP, said in a statement that the patrol was ambushed on the way to a raid and the attackers acquired five police weapons from the confrontation. Khan said reinforcement has reached the scene, moved the bodies to a hospital and started an investigation to find the perpetrators.</p> <p>Northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan borders Afghanistan and has seen Islamic militants largely known as Pakistani Taliban operate in the area for many years.</p> <p>The Pakistani Taliban are a separate group, but they are allies of the Afghan Taliban, who seized power in Afghanistan more than a year ago as U.S. and NATO troops were in the final stages of their pullout.</p> <p>The Taliban takeover in Afghanistan has emboldened the Pakistani Taliban. Although the Taliban in Afghanistan have encouraged Islamabad and the TTP to reach a peace agreement through dialogue, talks amid a ceasefire between the two sides that started in May proved futile.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	11/15 Seattle police warn of rental company scam
SOURCE	https://patch.com/washington/seattle/rental-company-scam-targets-victims-around-puget-sound-seattle-police
GIST	SEATTLE — Seattle detectives are investigating a Pierce County business owner on suspicion of fraud in a rental company scheme where victims invested in heavy equipment but saw none of the profits.

In a news release Tuesday, the Seattle Police Department said the suspect runs several businesses in Tacoma, Parkland, and Spanaway, including:

- Truck Rentals Co.
- Bobcat Rentals Co.
- Anytime Rentals Co.
- Seattle Equipment
- Bobcat Plumbing
- Bubba Rents
- Bubba Gump Group
- Divisions Maintenance Group
- Royal Cove Capital
- Boyd Tree Service
- Equipment Rental Co.
- Snow Removal Co.

While the case is ongoing, detectives said releasing preliminary findings could help identify more victims around Seattle and Tacoma.

Police said the man found some victims by posting on websites like "BizBuySell," where he solicited funds to buy dump trucks and other machinery, promising to split rental profits with each investor. After purchasing the machinery, police said the man accessed victims' private information and opened new accounts in their names, while failing to pay out any of the profits.

Investigators said the title documents were only in the suspect's name, making him the sole owner of each piece of equipment.

Anyone who may be a victim of fraud in the case, or a similar situation, can contact Seattle detectives [via e-mail](#).

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HEADLINE	11/15 Snohomish Co. officials warn of scam
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3715365/snohomish-county-officials-warn-of-scam-threatening-property-seizure/
GIST	<p>Snohomish County officials are warning residents of a new scam involving letters accusing recipients of owing taxes and demanding immediate repayment.</p> <p>The letters pose as correspondence from the county and threaten consequences like wage garnishment and property seizure if fees aren't paid. The fake notice also directs the taxpayer to call a toll-free (800) number "to avoid enforcement" and references federal tax liens.</p> <p>Envelopes appear to be postmarked from Sacramento, Calif. containing a return address that includes a Tax Processing Unit "Public Judgment Records" Department.</p> <p>Snohomish County Treasurer Brian Sullivan says the scammers appear to be pulling names from public records on federal lienholders.</p> <p>"They pull these names from our public records and send them these distraint warrants," Sullivan said. "It is somewhat of a laser operation, where it appears they are going after people with federal liens."</p> <p>Sullivan says their goal is to scare recipients into calling bogus call centers, something he refers to as "boiler rooms."</p> <p>"These boiler rooms will answer the phones and then browbeat you. It's very similar to IRS scams," Sullivan said. "The idea is what I think it does is it scares people into paying something that they thought they were unaware of."</p>

	<p>The treasurer's office has referred the matter to Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson, but he describes the scam as "sophisticated" and says it will be difficult to catch those responsible.</p> <p>He also reminds the public that legitimate Snohomish County Treasurer communications typically contain the official seal of the treasurer and a local return address, and the county treasurer is also not responsible for collecting or enforcing federal taxes.</p> <p>Sullivan urges anyone who has received letters like this to contact their local treasurer and the state's attorney general.</p> <p>"Talk to your local treasurer's office related to the county that you live in, and the state attorney general as well," Sullivan stressed.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Can world feed 8B people sustainably?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/nov/15/can-the-world-feed-8bn-people-sustainably
GIST	<p>More than enough food is produced to feed all of the 8 billion people currently alive on the planet, yet after a decade of steady decline hunger is back on the rise, affecting 10% of the global population. According to the World Food Programme, ripple effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have contributed to one of the worst food crises in decades, with acute food insecurity affecting 200 million more people globally than in 2019 due to rising costs of food, fuel and fertiliser.</p> <p>But there are bigger problems on the horizon. As the global population passes 8 billion and is predicted to reach 10 billion by 2050, farmers, governments and scientists face the challenge of increasing food production without exacerbating environmental degradation and the climate crisis, which itself contributes to food insecurity in the global south.</p> <p>The United Nations projects that food production from plants and animals will need to increase 70% by 2050, compared with 2009, to meet increasing food demand. But food production is already responsible for nearly a third of carbon emissions as well as 90% of deforestation around the world.</p> <p>"We use half of the world's vegetative land for agriculture," says Tim Searchinger, a researcher at Princeton University. "That's enormously bad for the environment. We can't solve the current problem by moving to more intensive agriculture because that requires more land.</p> <p>"We need to find a way to decrease our input [land] while increasing our food production."</p> <p>But there is no magic bullet to achieve this goal. Instead, an overhaul at every step of the food production chain, from the moment the seeds are planted in the soil to the point where the food reaches our dinner tables, will be necessary.</p> <p>Shifting towards regenerative agriculture</p> <p>For most of human history, agriculture consisted of sustenance farming – people cultivated crops and livestock to feed their households rather than to sell them for profit. This began to shift after the Industrial Revolution and emergence of market capitalism, which also saw the rise of plantation farming made possible by colonisation of overseas land and slave labour.</p> <p>Industrial farming not only increased the scale on which crops were cultivated but changed the techniques used by farmers. Instead of rotating the crops that were grown on a field each year, entire plantations would be dedicated to a single crop. This monocultural approach coupled with intensive modes of farming led to destruction of local biodiversity and land degradation – within years fields would cease to produce crops.</p>

Plantations of the 18th and 19th centuries were a “get rich quick scheme” rather than a stable long-term investment, says Frank Uekötter, a professor of environmental humanities at the University of Birmingham. Plantation owners would extract maximum profits in a short period of time from their land. Once a field became unusable they would simply move on to new land. “Up to the end of the 19th century, wide swaths of our planet were still not claimed by global modernity,” says Uekötter.

But today, while we are quickly running out of vegetative land, this colonial-era mindset persists. “The current agricultural paradigm is that land is cheap and infinite,” says Crystal Davis from the World Resources Institute. “Most farmers just cut down more trees, when new land is needed.”

“But to meet our ecological goals, we need to halt the conversion of natural ecosystems into farmland,” Davis says. “We can achieve this in part by restoring degraded land back to its ecological integrity and productivity.”

Land restoration does not have to mean bringing it back to its original, pre-agricultural, state. “There’s a hybrid solution where we are bringing trees and other natural elements back to the landscape while also integrating production systems,” Davis says. “Systems that are integrated with trees and other plants often are more sustainable and more productive over the long term.”

Davis points to the [20 x 20 initiative](#), which has seen 18 South American and Caribbean countries, including Argentina and Brazil, commit to restoring 50m hectares of land by 2030. The initiative includes a number of projects aimed at introducing agroforestry practices to cocoa and coffee farms in Colombia and Nicaragua, where farmers are encouraged to grow crops while introducing more trees to their land.

Cutting food miles by growing crops locally

Transportation is a key, if often overlooked, part of the food production chain. Crops are transported from farms to processing plants before the food products arrive in shops. Packaging and transportation of food is responsible for [11% of all food industry greenhouse gas emissions](#). The emissions are not only caused by petrol used by trucks, which transport food across countries and continents, but also the refrigeration systems necessary to keep the produce fresh on its journey.

Freight transport contributes significantly to the carbon footprint of fruit and vegetables, releasing [almost twice as much greenhouse gases](#) as the process of growing the crops. This means that to reduce the environmental impact of food production, a shift towards plant-based diets in wealthier countries has to be coupled with more locally grown produce.

“In the UK, roughly half the food comes from this country and half comes from other places around the world – that has a large carbon footprint,” says Madeleine Pullman, a professor of sustainability and innovation at the University of Sussex. A solution for countries like the UK, Pullman says, is to increase the diversity of food that is produced domestically by allocating subsidies to farmers to grow a wider range of fruits and vegetables.

But in lower-income countries with hot climates, transportation poses a different challenge, as refrigeration of produce during transit is costly, meaning that much of the food is spoiled or incubates bacteria before it reaches customers.

“It’s not always appropriate to move a western-style cooling system into a place in, for example, Africa,” Pullman says, pointing to Rwanda which introduced a national cooling strategy in 2018. Among other solutions, the plan includes subsidies for farmers to buy more efficient cooling equipment and trialling solar-powered cooling facilities.

“In Europe, we pay a lot of money to have food that has been moved and kept refrigerated, but when the vast majority are living in poverty, they cannot afford that,” Pullman says.

Abdulraheem Mukhtar Iderawumi, researcher at Oyo State College of Education in Nigeria, says that improving rural infrastructure such as roads and bridges would make transportation of harvested goods

more efficient for smallholder farmers. He also suggests increasing farmers' access to trucks specially designed for transporting food as well as sharing information on best practice. "Transportation should be done early in the morning or late in the evening," he says. "That is the time period when humidity is less of a risk to produce."

Eating less meat

Shifting dietary habits is one of the most necessary solutions to the climate crisis, but it is also one of the most controversial and difficult to introduce. More than half of all carbon emissions from the food industry are [due to production of meat and animal-based products](#). Beef production emits more than twice as much CO₂ a kilo of food [as other types of meat produce, and 20 to 200 times more than plant](#) products such as cane sugar or citrus.

Currently, [77% of agricultural land worldwide](#) is used for the production of animal-based products. This includes a [third of all cropland](#), as grains and crops are grown to produce animal feed and biofuel rather than for human consumption.

"Any global problem that you have, food is implicated in it," says Tara Garnett, a researcher at the University of Oxford. "On the one hand there are environmental problems associated with food, on the other there are health-related problems such as malnutrition, obesity and diabetes."

Garnett worked on the EAT-Lancet Commission, which in [2019 published its report on Planetary Health Diet](#). "The idea was to figure out if there is a way of feeding everyone in a nourishing way on this planet, in ways that don't cause environmental harm," Garnett says.

The diet can be best described as "flexitarian". Meat and dairy constitute important parts of the diet but in significantly smaller proportions than whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts and legumes. The diet recommends eating no more than 98 grams of red meat, 203 grams of poultry and 196 grams of fish a week.

"If you were to adhere to that diet, it would mean a massive reduction in meat, and to a lesser extent, dairy consumption in the global north, but it would actually give rise to more animal product consumption in many low-income countries," Garnett says.

However, implementing lifestyle changes among a whole population is difficult.

"[The report] caused a lot of controversy, some saw it as a kind of a 'vegan agenda'," Garnett says. "There hasn't been a country that has adopted the diet as its national dietary guideline."

She adds: "Meat reduction is a very contested and value-laden idea that is perhaps kind of more personal than, for example, switching your boiler." But she argues that changing dietary habits cannot be achieved by focusing on individuals. "All the drivers, all the incentives and the disincentives, are currently working against the ability of people to eat and behave differently," she says. "Stop blaming the individual is one point I would make. There is a much greater role for government leadership and the food industry to play."

Bamidele Raheem, a researcher at the University of Lapland, believes that dramatic changes in dietary habits might require generational change.

"Younger generations seem to be more curious about alternatives," he says of his research on entomophagy, the technical term for eating insects.

Insects, which are commonly eaten in parts of Africa, Asia and South America, can be a more sustainable alternative to meat protein. "They are much easier to rear than cattle. They can be produced in a much smaller space at a much higher rate and can be fed on food waste," Raheem says. "They are also richer in essential nutrients, such as iron, calcium and zinc."

But westerners, who are the biggest consumers of red meat, face substantial mental barriers to enriching their diets with insects. “This is where the mindset comes in,” Raheem says. “The approach to promoting insect diets is to disguise them in such a way that you wouldn’t recognise a live insect. For example, powdered crickets can be mixed with bread flour to make baked goods.”

The European Union has recently approved [house crickets](#), yellow mealworms and grasshopper to be sold in frozen, dried and powdered forms. Raheem thinks we could see baked goods made using the insect ingredients commonly sold in Europe within the next five years.

In 2019, only 9 million people across the EU were estimated to be consuming insect-based products, but the International Platform of Insects for Food and Feed forecasts [this number could reach 390 million](#) by 2030.

While meat consumption in the west seems to be slowing down, and self-reported consumption of meat in the [UK fell by 17%](#) between 2008 and 2018, researchers credit this with raising awareness of the ecological downsides of meat rather than specific initiatives.

Reducing food waste and loss

An estimated [third of all produced food is never eaten](#), according to the UN, with 14% of food lost between harvest and retail, and another 17% thrown out by shops, restaurants and consumers.

Food “loss” rather than “waste” describes the food that never reaches consumers. This problem is more prevalent in low-income countries where farmers cannot afford secure storage facilities and refrigeration. “When there are no proper storage facilities the crops can be destroyed by the rain,” says Abhishek Chaudhary, a researcher at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur.

In Kenya, for example, smallholder farmers who produce more than 90% of the country’s fruit and vegetables lose half of their harvest before they are able to sell it. “Better storage facilities will require a lot of technology transfer from richer countries to poorer ones and a holistic approach,” says Chaudhary.

An example of this could be a ColdHubs initiative in Nigeria, which allows farmers access to pay-as-you-go solar-powered cold rooms. The company currently operates [54 refrigeration units in 22 states](#) across the country.

In the global north, however, the problem of food waste – that is, food which is never eaten after it is sold – is more prevalent than food loss. According to a [UN report](#), 931m tonnes of food is thrown away every year, with most waste occurring in households.

“The consumers in rich countries need to be made aware of how much food they’re wasting,” says Chaudhary. “Big food companies also have responsibility. If they can design and label the product smartly, then the consumers who are buying it will waste less food. For example, they can make the package size smaller. If you have a packet of chips, for example, but people don’t usually eat all of it, then smaller packet is better.”

Digital data collection can also be used by shops, supermarkets and restaurants. “By using smart data, retailers can see which things consumers are buying and adjust their inventory,” says Chaudhary. “Individual households can also keep a food diary to see which products they end up throwing away.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 Highest Thanksgiving gas prices ever?
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/americans-will-see-highest-thanksgiving-gas-prices-ever-petroleum-analyst-says-holiday-travel-thanksgiving-travelers-aaa-oil-diesel-heating-homes-energy-winter-high-prices-inflation-economic-conditions-prices-up-october-consumer-price-index-holidays#
GIST	WASHINGTON (TND) — As Thanksgiving approaches, the busy holiday travel season will soon kick off. Millions of Americans will be filling up the tank before hitting the road.

Patrick De Haan, the head of petroleum analysis at Gas Buddy, [tweeted Tuesday](#) saying that this year, Americans will see the highest Thanksgiving gas prices ever.

Despite that, [AAA predicts](#) that 54.6 million people will travel 50 miles or more from home this Thanksgiving — a 1.5% increase over 2021 and 98% of pre-pandemic volumes.

De Haan explained that the lingering effects of pandemic shutdowns combined with the volume of travelers expected this holiday season is part of the reason prices are so much higher than in previous years.

“Shutting down refineries then demand surging — exacerbated by Russia's war in Ukraine which brought on sanctions, which are now trying to stem the flow of oil out of Russia — that's driving up oil prices,” De Haan said. “A lot of it has been refineries shutting down during COVID. We've lost about a million barrels a day of capacity.”

De Haan said that, combined with millions of Americans taking into the road has led to a situation where there's simply not as much supply to meet demand. He adds that for those traveling for the holiday, waiting as long as possible is one way to pinch pennies.

“I think you absolutely wait as long as possible. The [price of oil](#) now is down about \$8 a barrel in the last week so that should be a wait until you hit the road. You don't need to fill the tank up just yet. Certainly, wait until next week,” he said.

De Haan also predicts that on the other side of the holiday, prices will drop. He says it's a seasonal norm.

“Demand is going down and cooler weather keeps Americans closer to home. That combined with refinery maintenance season — which is wrapping up — should boost production of gasoline. In addition, diesel prices are amongst the highest they've been for Thanksgiving, in refineries chasing that profit are going to have to produce more gasoline to produce for diesel and that should help bring gas prices down towards the end of the year,” De Haan said.

As those lower temperatures move in, there are also concerns about the impact on [home heating costs](#). In New England, there's been a surge in demand for firewood as the high prices push them to search for alternative ways to heat their homes. De Haan says all Americans can do is hope for a warmer-than-expected winter.

“It really is contingent on Mother Nature,” De Haan said. “That could reduce heating oil consumption. Keep in mind heating oil and diesel are essentially twins. They're the same product used for different reasons. Diesel and heating oil inventories are extremely tight, so don't expect much of a break. But again, it's really on Mother Nature.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 Marijuana more harmful than cigarettes?
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/smoking-marijuana-harmful-lungs-smoking-cigarettes-study-finds/story?id=93283206
GIST	<p>People who smoke marijuana were more likely to have certain types of lung damage than people who smoked cigarettes, according to a new study that reviewed lung scans of smokers. The researchers who led the study say their findings suggest smoking marijuana may be more harmful than people realize.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates at least one-fifth of Americans have tried marijuana at least once. With more states legalizing the drug, it has become the most commonly used drug that is still illegal at a federal level.</p>

Some [health effects](#), such as brain development issues, high blood pressure, and increased risk of heart attacks and strokes, have been studied. However, according to Dr. Albert Rizzo, lung doctor and chief medical officer of the American Lung Association, “We don’t know the long-term effects of marijuana as we do for the long-term effects of tobacco.”

Researchers from Ottawa Hospital General in Canada compared approximately 150 lung scans from marijuana smokers, tobacco-only smokers and nonsmokers. The study found that rates of emphysema, airway inflammation and enlarged breast tissue were higher in marijuana than in tobacco smokers.

The scans showed that 75% of the marijuana smokers had emphysema. Slightly less than 70% of tobacco-only smokers had emphysema, while only 5% of nonsmokers had it.

Emphysema, a form of chronic obstructive lung disease (COPD), is the [third leading cause of death in the U.S.](#)

“There are air sacs in your lungs that are getting bigger than they should. As they get bigger, they are less efficient than they should be for gas exchange,” Rizzo said. The condition is caused by long-term exposure to irritants such as smoke, leading to irreversible lung damage.

“Marijuana smokers had more emphysema, a disease that causes difficulty breathing, than heavy tobacco smokers and nonsmokers,” said Dr. Giselle Revah, study co-author and cardiothoracic radiologist.

Doctors say there are several reasons marijuana might cause more lung damage than tobacco.

“Marijuana smokers breathe in more deeply, and they hold their breath longer, before they exhale. You combine the irritating effect of longer exposure and deeper inhalation of these toxins,” Rizzo said.

Tobacco smoke is also filtered, but marijuana smoke is not. All of these factors contribute to inflammation and irreversible damage, doctors say.

“Anything you inhale that could irritate the lungs would not be advisable, so I would recommend they stop,” Rizzo said. However, he recognizes that some users have medical necessity -- for those individuals, he recommends a discussion with your doctor, who may be able to convert you to another, safer form of the drug, such as an ingestible form.

“There is a public perception that marijuana is safe. This study signals that marijuana could be more harmful than people realize,” Revah said.

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	11/14 DEA's most corrupt agent
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/soccer-sports-la-liga-money-laundering-puerto-rico-38aed2da8cd0ac237aca28aa39321105
GIST	<p>SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — José Irizarry accepts that he’s known as the most corrupt agent in U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration history, admitting he “became another man” in conspiring with Colombian cartels to build a lavish lifestyle of expensive sports cars, Tiffany jewels and paramours around the world.</p> <p>But as he used his final hours of freedom to tell his story to The Associated Press, Irizarry says he won’t go down for this alone, accusing some long-trusted DEA colleagues of joining him in skimming millions of dollars from drug money laundering stings to fund a decade’s worth of luxury overseas travel, fine dining, top seats at sporting events and frat house-style debauchery.</p>

The way Irizarry tells it, dozens of other federal agents, prosecutors, informants and in some cases cartel smugglers themselves were all in on the three-continent joyride known as “Team America” that chose cities for money laundering pick-ups mostly for party purposes or to coincide with Real Madrid soccer or Rafael Nadal tennis matches. That included stops along the way in VIP rooms of Caribbean strip joints, Amsterdam’s red-light district and aboard a Colombian yacht that launched with plenty of booze and more than a dozen prostitutes.

“We had free access to do whatever we wanted,” the 48-year-old Irizarry told the AP in a series of interviews before beginning a 12-year [federal prison sentence](#). “We would generate money pick-ups in places we wanted to go. And once we got there it was about drinking and girls.”

All this revelry was rooted, Irizarry said, in a crushing realization among DEA agents around the world that there’s nothing they can do to make a dent in the drug war anyway. Only nominal concern was given to actually building cases or stemming a record flow of illegal cocaine and opioids into the United States that has driven more than 100,000 drug overdose deaths a year.

“You can’t win an unwinnable war. DEA knows this and the agents know this,” Irizarry said. “There’s so much dope leaving Colombia. And there’s so much money. We know we’re not making a difference.”

“The drug war is a game. ... It was a very fun game that we were playing.”

Irizarry’s story, which some former colleagues have attacked as a fictionalized attempt to reduce his sentence, came in days of contrite, bitter, sometimes tearful interviews with the AP in the historic quarter of his native San Juan. It was much the same account he gave the FBI in lengthy debriefings and sealed court papers obtained by the AP after he pleaded guilty in 2020 to 19 corruption counts, including money laundering and bank fraud.

But after years of portraying Irizarry as a [rogue agent](#) who acted alone, U.S. Justice Department investigators have in recent months begun closely following his confessional roadmap, questioning as many as two-dozen current and former DEA agents and prosecutors accused by Irizarry of turning a blind eye to his flagrant abuses and sometimes joining in.

With little fanfare, the inquiry has focused on a jet-setting former partner of Irizarry and several other trusted DEA colleagues assigned to international money laundering. And at least three current and former federal prosecutors have faced questioning about Irizarry’s raucous parties, including one still in a senior role in Miami, another who appeared on TV’s “The Bachelorette” and a former Ohio prosecutor who was confirmed to serve as the U.S. attorney in Cleveland this year [before abruptly backing out](#) for unspecified family reasons.

The expanding investigation comes as the nation’s premier narcotics law enforcement agency has been rattled by repeated misconduct scandals in its 4,600-agent ranks, from one who [took bribes from traffickers](#) to another accused of [leaking confidential information](#) to law enforcement targets. But by far the biggest black eye is Irizarry, whose wholesale betrayal of the badge is at the heart of an ongoing external review of the DEA’s sprawling foreign operations in 69 countries.

The once-standout agent has accused some former colleagues in the DEA’s Miami-based Group 4 of lining their pockets and falsifying records to replenish a slush fund used for foreign jaunts over the better part of a decade, until his resignation in 2018. He accused a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent of accepting a \$20,000 bribe. And recently, the FBI, Office of Inspector General and a federal prosecutor interviewed Irizarry in prison about other federal employees and allegations he raised about misconduct in maritime interdictions.

“It was too outlandish for them to believe this is actually happening,” Irizarry said of investigators. “The indictment paints a picture of me, the corrupt agent that did this entire scheme. But it doesn’t talk about the rest of DEA. I wasn’t the mastermind.”

The federal judge in Tampa who sentenced Irizarry last year seemed to agree, saying other agents corrupted by the “allure of easy money” need to be investigated. “This has to stop,” Judge Charlene Honeywell told prosecutors, adding Irizarry was “the one who got caught but it is apparent to this court that there are others.”

The Justice Department declined to comment. A DEA spokesperson said: “José Irizarry is a criminal who violated his oath as a federal law enforcement officer and violated the trust of the American people. Over the past 16 months, DEA has worked vigorously to further strengthen our discipline and hiring policies to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of our essential work.”

AP was able to corroborate some, but not all, of Irizarry’s accusations through thousands of confidential law enforcement records and dozens of interviews with those familiar with his claims and the ongoing investigation, including several who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss them.

The probe is focused in part on George Zoumberos, one of Irizarry’s former partners who traveled overseas extensively for money laundering investigations. Irizarry told AP that Zoumberos enjoyed unfettered access to so-called commission funds and improperly tapped that money for personal purchases and unwarranted trips, using names of people that didn’t exist in DEA reports justifying the excesses.

Zoumberos remained a DEA agent even after he was arrested and briefly detained on allegations of sexual assault during a trip to Madrid in 2018. He resigned only after being stripped of his gun, badge and security clearance for invoking his Fifth Amendment rights to stay silent in late 2019, when the same prosecutor who charged Irizarry summoned him to testify before a federal grand jury in Tampa.

Authorities are so focused on Zoumberos that they also subpoenaed his brother, a Florida wedding photographer who traveled and partied around the world with DEA agents, and even granted him immunity to induce his cooperation. But Michael Zoumberos also refused to testify and has been jailed outside Tampa since March for “civil contempt” — an exceedingly rare pressure tactic that underscores the rising temperature of the investigation.

“I didn’t do anything wrong, but I’m not going to talk about my brother,” Michael Zoumberos told AP in a jailhouse interview. “I’m basically being held as a political prisoner of the FBI. They want to coerce me into cooperating.”

Some current and former DEA agents say Irizarry’s claims are overblown or flat-out fabrications. The former ICE agent scoffed at Irizarry’s accusation he took a \$20,000 bribe, saying he raised early red flags about Irizarry. And the lawyer for the Zoumberos brothers says prosecutors are on a “fishing expedition” to bring more indictments because of the embarrassment of the Irizarry scandal.

“Everybody they connect to José is extraneous to his thefts,” said attorney Raymond Mansolillo. “They’re looking to find a crime to fit this case as opposed to a crime that actually took place. But no matter what happens they’re going to charge somebody with something because they don’t want to come out of all of this after five years and have only charged José.”

Making Irizarry’s allegations more egregious is that they came on the heels of a 2015 Inspector General’s report that slammed DEA agents for participating in [“sex parties”](#) with prostitutes hired by Colombian cartels. That prompted the suspension of several agents and the [retirement](#) of Michele Leonhart, the DEA’s administrator at the time.

Central to the Irizarry investigation are overly cozy relationships developed between agents and informants — strictly forbidden under federal guidelines — and loose controls on the DEA's undercover drug money laundering operations that few Americans know exist.

Every year, the DEA launders tens of millions of dollars on behalf of the world's most-violent drug cartels through shell companies, a tactic touted in long-running overseas investigations such as Operation White Wash that resulted in more than 100 arrests and the seizure of more than \$100 million and a ton of cocaine.

But the DEA has also faced criticism for allowing huge amounts of money in the operations to go unseized, enabling cartels to continue plying their trade, and for failing to tightly monitor and track the stings, making it difficult to evaluate results.

A [2020 Justice Department Inspector General's report](#) faulted the DEA for failing since at least 2006 to file annual reports to Congress about these stings, known as Attorney General Exempted Operations. That rebuke, coupled with the embarrassment brought on by Irizarry's confession, prompted DEA Administrator Anne Milgram to order an outside review of the agency's foreign operations, which is ongoing.

"In the vast majority of these operations, nobody is watching," said Bonnie Klapper, a former federal prosecutor in New York and outspoken critic of DEA money laundering. "In the Irizarry operation, nobody cared how much money they were laundering. Nobody cared that they weren't making any cases. Nobody was minding the house. There were no controls."

Rob Feitel, another former federal prosecutor, said the DEA's lax oversight made it easy to divert funds for all kinds of unapproved purposes. And as long as money seizures kept driving stats higher — a low bar given abundant supply — few questions were asked.

"The other agents aren't stupid. They knew there were no controls and a lot of them could have done what Irizarry did," said Feitel, who represents a former DEA agent under scrutiny in the inquiry. "The line that separates Irizarry from the others is he did it with both hands and he did it over and over and over. He didn't just test the waters, he took a full bath in it."

Irizarry, who speaks in a smooth patter that seamlessly switches between English and Spanish, was a federal air marshal and Border Patrol agent before joining the DEA in 2009. He said he learned the tricks of the trade as a DEA rookie from veteran cops who came up in New York City in the 1990s when cocaine flooded American streets.

But another key part of his education came from Diego Marín, a longtime U.S. informant known to investigators as Colombia's "Contraband King" for allegedly laundering dope money through imported appliances and other goods. Irizarry said Marín taught him better than any agent ever could the nuances of the black-market peso exchange used by narcotraffickers across the world.

Irizarry parlayed that knowledge into a life of luxury that prosecutors say was bankrolled by \$9 million he and his Colombian co-conspirators diverted from money laundering investigations.

To further the scheme, Irizarry filed false reports and ordered DEA staff to wire money slated for undercover stings to international accounts he and associates controlled. Hardened informants who kept a hefty commission from every cash transfer sanctioned by the DEA also stepped in to fund some of the revelry in what amounted to illegal kickbacks.

Irizarry's spending habits quickly began to mimic the ostentatious tastes of the narcos he was tasked with targeting, with spoils including a \$30,000 Tiffany diamond ring for his wife, luxury sports cars and a \$767,000 home in the Colombian resort city of Cartagena. He'd travel first class to Europe with Louis Vuitton luggage and wearing a gold Hublot watch.

“I was very good at what I did but I became somebody I wasn’t. ... I became a different man,” Irizarry said. “I got caught up in the lifestyle. I got caught up with the informants and partying.”

Irizarry contends as many as 90% of his group’s work trips were “bogus,” dictated by partying and sporting events, not real work. And he says the U.S. government money that helped pay for it was justified in reports as “case-related — but that’s a very vague term.”

Case in point: an August 2014 trip to Madrid for the Spanish Supercup soccer finals that was charged as an expense to Operation White Wash.

But Irizarry told investigators there was little actual work to be done other than courtesy calls to a few friendly Spanish cops. Instead, he said, agents spent their time dining at pricey restaurants — racking up a 1,000-euro bill at one — and enjoying field-side seats for the championship match between Real and Atletico Madrid.

Joining the posse of agents at the game was Michael J. Garofola, a then-Miami federal prosecutor and erstwhile contestant on “The Bachelorette” who posted a thumbs-up photo on Instagram standing next to Irizarry and another agent — all clad in white Real Madrid jerseys.

“Soaking up the last bit of Spanish culture before saying adios,” he posted a few days later outside a pub.

Irizarry alleged that Garofola also joined agents, cartel informants and others in the Dominican capital of Santo Domingo in 2014 for a night at a strip club called Doll House. In a memo to the court seeking a reduction in his sentence, Irizarry recalled being in the VIP room with another agent and Garofola, racking up a \$2,300 bill paid for by a violent emissary of Marín with a menacing nickname to match: Iguana.

Garofola said the trips included official business and he was told everything was being paid for out of DEA funds.

“There were things about those trips that made me question why I was there,” Garofola told AP. “But Irizarry totally used me to ratify this behavior. I was brand new and green and eager to work money laundering cases. He used me just by my being there.”

When Irizarry was awarded with a transfer to Cartagena in 2015, the party followed. The agent’s rooftop pool, with sweeping ocean views, became an obligatory stop for visiting agents and prosecutors from the U.S.

One that Irizarry recalls seeing there was Marisa Darden, a prosecutor from Cleveland who he says traveled to Colombia in September 2017 and was at a gathering where he witnessed two DEA agents taking ecstasy. Irizarry says he didn’t see Darden taking drugs.

Federal authorities have taken a keen interest in that party, quizzing Irizarry about it as recently as this summer. At least one DEA agent who attended has been placed on administrative leave.

Darden went on to become a partner in a high-powered Cleveland law firm and last year was nominated by President Joe Biden to be the first Black woman U.S. attorney in northern Ohio. But soon after she was confirmed, Darden abruptly withdrew in May, citing only “the importance of prioritizing family.”

Darden refused to answer questions from AP but her attorney said in a statement that she “cooperated fully” with the federal investigation into “alleged illegal activity by federal agents,” an inquiry separate from the FBI background check she faced in the confirmation process.

“There is no evidence that she participated in any illegal activity,” Darden’s attorney, James Wooley, wrote in an email to AP.

A White House official said the allegations did not come up in the vetting process. And U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat who put Darden's name up for the post, was also unaware of the allegations in the nomination process, his office said, and had he known "would have withdrawn his support."

Another federal prosecutor named by Irizarry and questioned by federal agents was Monique Botero, who was recently promoted to head the narcotics division at the U.S. attorney's office in Miami. Irizarry told investigators and the AP that Botero joined a group of agents, informants, Colombian police and prostitutes for a party on a luxury yacht.

Botero's lawyers acknowledge she was on the yacht in September 2015 for what she thought was a cruise organized by local police, but they say "categorically and unequivocally, Monique never saw or participated in anything illegal or unethical."

"Irizarry has admitted that he lied to everyone around him for various nefarious reasons. These lies about Monique are part of a similar pattern," said her attorney, Benjamin Greenberg. "It is appalling that Monique is being maligned and defamed by someone as disgraced as Irizarry."

Irizarry's downfall was as sudden as it was inevitable — the outgrowth of a lavish lifestyle that raised too many eyebrows, even among colleagues willing to bend the rules themselves. Eventually, he was betrayed by one of his closest confidants, a Venezuelan-American informant who confessed to diverting funds from the undercover stings.

"José's problem is that he took things to the point of stupidity and trashed the party for everyone else," said one defense attorney who traveled with Irizarry and other agents. "But there's no doubt he didn't act alone."

Since his arrest, Irizarry has written a self-published book titled "Getting Back on Track," part of his attempt to own up to his mistakes and pursue a simpler path after bringing so much shame upon himself and his family.

Recently, his Colombian-born wife — who was spared jail time on a money laundering charge in exchange for Irizarry's confession — told him she was seeking a divorce.

Adding to Irizarry's despair is that he is still the only one to pay such a heavy price for a pattern of misconduct that he says the DEA allowed to fester. To date, prosecutors have yet to charge any other agents, and several former colleagues have quietly retired rather than endure the disgrace of possibly being fired.

"I've told them everything I know," Irizarry said. "All they have to do is dig."

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HEADLINE	11/15 Jamaica: public emergency gang violence
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/jamaica-declares-regional-states-emergency-due-gang-violence-2022-11-15/
GIST	<p>KINGSTON, Nov 15 (Reuters) - Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness on Tuesday declared a state of public emergency in parts of the capital Kingston and in some central and western parishes in an attempt to control rising crime linked to gang violence.</p> <p>States of emergency give authorities increased powers, including the ability to search buildings and carry out arrests without warrants. Tuesday's measures apply to areas that include popular tourist destinations such as Montego Bay.</p>

	<p>"We have seen an increase in criminal activities in these areas and a threat to property and in some instances public disorder," Holness said in a televised address.</p> <p>"What we are seeing with gang activities in these areas is cause for grave concern," he added.</p> <p>Holness predicted an increase in murders over the next several weeks with the onset of the holiday season, when violent crime typically spikes.</p> <p>Commissioner of Police Antony Anderson on Tuesday said 1,360 murders were registered in Jamaica between Jan 1 and Nov. 13, an increase of 6.8% over the same period in 2021.</p> <p>Gang violence was the reason for 71% of those murders, he said.</p> <p>Rights groups have challenged detentions carried out during states of emergency.</p> <p>Jamaica's Supreme Court this year said authorities violated the rights of a man who said he was arbitrarily arrested and detained for months without trial during a state of emergency.</p> <p>Jamaica, which has one of the region's highest homicide rates, is seeking to crack down on gangs through laws that target organized crime and illegal guns.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Break-in: minks released from Ohio farm
SOURCE	https://www.wane.com/top-stories/thousands-of-mink-released-from-van-wert-county-farm/
GIST	<p>VAN WERT COUNTY, Ohio (WANE) — Police in Van Wert County said someone broke into a mink farm overnight and released more than 25,000 of the small animals from their cages.</p> <p>The incident happened early Tuesday at Lion Farms USA Mink Farm on Hoaglin Road in Hoaglin Township, six miles north of Van Wert, according to a post from the Van Wert County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>The sheriff's office said the suspect or suspects destroyed fencing at the farm and released 25,000-40,000 mink from their cages. Many remained on property and were corralled by farm workers, the sheriff's office said.</p> <p>Others escaped, though.</p> <p>A WANE 15 crew at the farm was told many of the mink are being killed when they are found. In a news release around 4 p.m., the sheriff's office said 10,000 mink were still unaccounted for.</p> <p>Now, the sheriff's office is warning about the mink.</p> <p><i>"Minks are carnivorous mammals that stick to a diet consisting of fresh kills. They regularly hunt prey bigger than themselves. As a result, they can be a bothersome pest for homeowners, livestock owners, and property managers. Minks have proven to be especially costly and problematic for poultry ranchers as well as homeowners with ornamental ponds filled with koi and other fish,"</i> the sheriff's office said in the post.</p> <p>It's not clear who broke into the farm to release the animals. The sheriff's office said the incident was under investigation.</p> <p>Eddie Meyer, manager of the mink farm, told WANE 15 the break-in must have happened between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m.</p> <p>On the wall near where the fence was cut, the letters "ALF" were spray painted alongside the phrase "we'll be back."</p>

In 2004, John E. Lewis, who was the deputy assistant director for the FBI at the time, [spoke to the Senate Judiciary Committee regarding ALF](#), which is short for Animal Liberation Front.

ALF was established in Great Britain in the 1970s and is a loosely organized extremist movement committed to ending the abuse and exploitation of animals, according to Lewis.

Lewis also described ALF at the time as a group that had emerged as a “serious domestic terrorist threat.”

Lewis said ALF members “engage in ‘direct action’ against companies or individuals who, in their view, utilize animals for research or economic gain, or do some manner of business with those companies or individuals.”

Meyer said 95% of the minks will die within a few days due to being domesticated and not used to hunting in the wild.

Meyer estimated the farm has been able to get back approximately 7,000 mink, and the rest are being hunted by the farm and locals.

The sheriff’s office said property owners who have mink come onto their property have the right to protect their property, but individuals who discharged a firearm in municipal areas can be in violation of law.

Property owners with a hunting license exemption can also hunt or trap a fur-bearing animal on his or her own lands without a fur taker permit, the sheriff’s office added.

Ohio State Patrol, Paulding County Sheriff’s Office, ODNR, EMA, and ODOT are all involved in the investigation.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Seattle principal stonewalled police
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3706947/rantz-seattle-principal-stonewalled-police-suspect-allegedly-assaulted-two-victims/
GIST	<p>A Seattle principal is seen on video stonewalling a police investigation. An officer says it allowed a dangerous suspect to escape and allegedly commit two assaults. This incident comes as police said they have encountered more hostility from Seattle Public Schools (SPS) staff when responding to incidents.</p> <p>Liban Harasam allegedly assaulted a young girl before stealing a student’s backpack at Sand Point Elementary in Seattle. According to court documents, Harasam admits to being a drug user (meth, fentanyl, and marijuana) and may suffer from mental illness. Before this incident, he had been arrested nine previous times in the last year.</p> <p>Police couldn’t detain Harasam at the time of the alleged crime on June 2. Then-principal Ric Baileykaze refused to cooperate with the responding officer, making it impossible to establish probable cause for an arrest.</p> <p>Police say Harasam assaulted a DHL driver while on the loose and injured a police officer while resisting arrest. These alleged crimes could have been prevented had Baileykaze cooperated with the police.</p> <p>Baileykaze’s dismissal of police was caught on bodycam footage obtained by the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. Since the incident, Baileykaze has left Sand Point. SPS would not confirm what happened, but a school staff member said he took an education job out of the country. The Jason Rantz Show on KTTH has yet to be able to reach Baileykaze via phone or social media after several attempts.</p> <p>Stonewalling cops</p>

When an SPD officer arrived on campus, Baileykaze and staff watched Harasam wander around the campus, dumping items out of a backpack, according to body cam footage. Baileykaze offered only a few details to the officer. The school was on lockdown at the time, but the principal did not tell the officer. According to police, a teacher had to yell to her students to flee when Harasam allegedly hopped over the fence to get on campus.

Harasam explained to the officer that someone was “doing a hostage situation” and “kidnapping kids over here.” The officer radioed dispatch to explain this was a 220 situation — a mental health complaint.

The suspect was allowed to walk away as the officer attempted to establish probable cause for an arrest.

“He entered a classroom, said he wanted to talk to a student, and he said he wanted to take a student. Again, I don’t think he was in the right mindset. And he grabbed a student’s backpack,” Baileykaze said, according to the bodycam footage.

Baileykaze said he didn’t know where the student was, and that Harasam may have dropped the student’s backpack while wandering the campus. At this point, Harasam fled.

‘We’re good’

The officer told dispatch that Harasam was “a possible suspect in a backpack theft, but I can’t verify that yet.”

Baileykaze then showed the officer the stolen backpack. Harasam did, apparently, drop it. When the officer asked where the student was, and if anything was stolen, Baileykaze held his hands up like he was done talking.

“Can we check with the student, see if there’s anything missing? Because if I have to put hands on this guy, it’s going to go south,” the officer told Baileykaze.

Baileykaze then refused to cooperate, even after previously alleging Harasam “wanted to take a student.”

“I don’t mean to tell you what to do at all, but we’re good. We’re good. I’ll replace this stuff on my own. Thank you. Thank you,” Baileykaze tells the officer as he begins walking away.

The officer told dispatch that the principal is “declining to talk to me.”

Preventable assaults

Police say Harasam assaulted a nearby DHL driver after he fled. Body cam footage shows the victim talking with officers as they determine if he needs medical attention. Police say the driver had two cuts on his lip.

“[The driver] observed the male suspect get into the driver seat of his van,” an officer writes in a police report. “He began yelling at the male to get out, believing the suspect was about to steal the vehicle. [The driver] got to the door of the vehicle and was stuck in the face with what he believed was a blue binder. He attempted to move out of the way of the strike, but was hit in the mouth, causing a split bleeding lip. [He] pulled the male out of the vehicle, but the suspect grabbed at the mounted cell phone that the victim had by the steering wheel. The victim believed that the suspect was attempting to steal his phone before exiting the vehicle.”

Harasam then boarded a nearby King County Metro bus, presumably to flee. Before the bus could leave, officers were able to board and make an arrest. But Harasam didn’t go quietly.

The suspect is seen on body cam footage resisting arrest and screaming at officers. During the melee, an officer was injured, and Harasam was eventually subdued.

When other officers arrived, Harasam was agitated and attempted to resist while officers waited for medics to arrive. At one point, he insists the police don't have probable cause to detain him.

Principal remained defiant

These assaults would not have occurred had the officer been able to detain and arrest Harasam. Officers returned to the school to let the principal know what had happened due to being uncooperative.

The body camera footage shows Baileykaze seemed reluctant to meet with the officer in the administrator's office.

"Actually, I can't wait because we have an injured officer," the officer responded before taking him into another room to talk.

"See, the reason I needed your information was he committed a crime but when you walked off, we had no crime so I couldn't legally do anything. And he tried to assault and rob a DHL driver. Then he went on a metro bus and assaulted a bus driver. I finally need to get your information," the officer tells the principal.

"When they said your school was locked down, the other lady I was talking to, said the school is on lockdown. So, you know, these are the kinds of things we need to know," the officer continued.

'I couldn't have you walk away'

The officer explained that his wife is a teacher and he understands the safety concerns at schools. He explained to Baileykaze that just because Harasam did not have any weapons, did not mean he wasn't a threat. But by refusing to cooperate, the officer said it went from a simple misdemeanor to felonies allegedly being committed.

"I couldn't have you walk away because I had nothing based off of what you said. Based on the law, we go enforce the laws. If we don't have a crime, I have no legal recourse to contact him other than a social contact, that he walked off, which he did. It wasn't until he tried robbing the DHL driver, that I had a crime and a felony at that. That could have been avoided if I knew that he had stolen a backpack at the time," the officer concluded.

At this point, a teacher walked in. She says on the body cam footage that witnesses say Harasam grabbed a few students. She says he was "fixated" on one girl and tried to get her to go with him.

"He was trying to come into our classroom and I was in the doorway, trying to keep him away from this student who was cowering and crying in a corner near him," the teacher said.

It remains unclear why Baileykaze did not cooperate with police, though he appeared more understanding during this follow-up. But police say this kind of treatment has become more common.

Police say they are being rebuffed by Seattle Public School staff

Several officers speaking to the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH on the condition of anonymity have suggested they're noticing an uptick of dismissive treatment from some school staff when responding to issues on campus. Some have witnessed it; others have heard second hand from other officers.

They said staff are either rude to them or seem reluctant to share information.

Police speculate it's due to the general anti-police posture that SPS has taken since the Black Lives Matter (BLM) riots and protests in 2020. They suspected staff did not want to be seen as cooperative with police, which have been falsely accused of spreading a white supremacist culture that targets minority communities.

Seattle Police Officer Guild president Officer Mike Solan tells the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH that his membership has complained of this issue to him. He blames SPS leadership for spreading anti-police messages.

“We have a fundamental breakdown in our value system. It’s a moral decay. And that’s obviously evident with some of the faculty in these schools. That starts from the top down,” Solan explained.

The school board previously removed school resource officers (SROs) from campus. Student activists, regurgitating the anti-police talking points from educators and community activists, falsely claim SROs make campus less safe and that they target minority students. Two weeks ago, a 14-year-old student allegedly murdered a 17-year-old classmate at Ingram High School. It’s prompted renewed calls to return SROs to the campus since students have committed more violence on campus within the last year than police ever have.

After the incident with Baileykaze, first reported by the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH, a SPS spokesperson indicated leadership would meet with SPD to discuss ways to better communicate incidents in the future.

What is happening to Harasam?

Without the cooperation of the school, Harasam was initially charged by the Seattle City Attorney’s office for criminal trespass, vehicle prowling, two counts of misdemeanour assault, and resisting arrest.

But a judge dismissed Harasam’s case.

“In this instance, the City filed against Harasam and secured \$10,000 bail for this individual on 6/3/22. Defense raised competency, and following an evaluation, Harasam was determined to incompetent to stand trial. He was released and the case was dismissed on 6/21/22,” a City Attorney spokesperson explained to the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH.

The King County Prosecutors, however, filed felony charges against Harasam before his release. The SPD was finally able to get more information from the school. It justified felony charges of burglary and assault of a child in the second degree.

Harasam had a Nov. 14 competency hearing continued to a later date. He remains in custody.

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HEADLINE	11/15 ‘Chemical similar to PCP’ sold as ketamine
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/z34kww/vic-health-warns-of-chemical-similar-to-pcp-sold-as-ketamine
GIST	<p>White powder containing a chemical known as 3-Hydroxy-PCP (3-HO-PCP) is being sold as Ketamine in Victoria, Health Victoria has warned.</p> <p>Over the past few weeks, there’s been an “unusually high” number of people seeking emergency medical support after taking what they believed to be ketamine, Health Victoria said in a statement. Instead, health officials have declared that these cases have often involved 3-HO-PCP, described as white powder similar to ketamine.</p> <p>Like Ketamine, 3-HO-PCP is a dissociative, meaning it increases feelings of detachment, or distance from reality. However, users of the drug report 3-HO-PCP has a higher potency than ketamine, and takes longer to come on and wear off. 3-HO-PCP is similar to PCP, or “angel dust”, and may have undesirable effects including hallucinations, agitation, and increase in heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature.</p> <p>The differences between 3-HO-PCP and ketamine can be identified in how long it takes for the drug to become active.</p> <p>“3-HO-PCP can take around 20 to 40 minutes to have a noticeable effect and lasts about three to four hours. Ketamine usually has an effect in 7.5 to 20 minutes and lasts one to two hours. If you experience delayed or unexpected drug effects, do not take more,” Health Victoria wrote.</p>

	<p>If taken with depressants such as opioids, benzodiazepines, GHB, or alcohol, 3-HO-PCP can become incredibly dangerous, increasing the risk of overdose and possibly lead to loss of consciousness or difficulty breathing.</p> <p>Ketamine has been increasing in popularity over the past few years. According to the National Drug Strategy Household Survey from 2019, the amount of people using ketamine doubled between 2016 to 2019 (0.4 percent of the population to 0.9 percent), with people in their 20's the most likely to use.</p> <p>And, this year, the Australian Drug Trend report of 2022 from the University of New South Wales National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, found that there's been a steady incline since 2009, with the amount of people who regularly use ketamine rising by 21 percent in COVID-19 lockdowns.</p> <p>But as the drug increases in popularity as does the frequency of dealers selling other substances in place of ketamine, or impure batches of the drug, cut with other substances.</p> <p>In September, VIC Health warned that Protonitazene, a novel synthetic opioid three times stronger than fentanyl, was being sold as ketamine. The most recent CanTEST pill-testing day in Canberra found four samples containing a new imitation ketamine, 2F-NENDCK, or "CanKet".</p> <p>VIC Health urged ketamine users to extend caution, and implement harm reduction actions.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/16 Colombia 'Total Peace' w/cocaine cartels
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/3ady7k/colombia-gustavo-petro-drug-war-total-peace
GIST	<p>When Colombia's newly elected president, Gustavo Petro, stood before the United Nations earlier this year, he reminded world leaders gathered where most of the actual battles have been fought since the United States launched the war on drugs over 40 years ago.</p> <p>"There has been a genocide on my continent and in my country; millions of people have been sentenced to prison," Petro said, linking U.S.-backed efforts to eradicate coca—the plant used to make cocaine—to destruction of the Amazon jungle and global warming, not to mention the narco-violence that has killed thousands.</p> <p>"The war on drugs has failed, the fight against the climate crisis has failed," Petro said. "I demand from here, from my wounded Latin America, to put an end to the irrational war on drugs. Reducing drug use does not need wars, it needs us all to build a better society."</p> <p>To end the drug war in Colombia, the 62-year-old Petro, an economist and former left-wing guerrilla, is pushing an audacious new initiative dubbed "Total Peace" that aims to bring all of the country's armed groups and criminal actors to the table to negotiate demobilization or surrender, thus ending decades of bloody, cocaine-fueled conflict.</p> <p>The devil is in the details, which remain vague, but a who's who of the country's most powerful mafias, paramilitaries, and cartels have expressed interest in taking deals to potentially limit prison time and prevent U.S. extradition. Colombia's congress just approved legislation to formalize the process. At the same time, Petro officials are reaching out to impoverished coca farmers and seeking to rekindle efforts at crop substitution, the oft-hyped but chronically under-funded alternative of swapping coca plants for coffee and other high-value crops.</p> <p>If this all sounds too good to be true, there are plenty of skeptics ready to say Petro's plan is doomed to fail, including many Americans involved in fighting the drug war in Colombia. VICE News interviewed a range of sources—including a former ambassador, ex-DEA agents, and an ex-narcotics prosecutor, along with independent experts who favor progressive reforms. All expressed varying degrees of doubt about the viability of Total Peace.</p>

While the jury is still out as Petro's plan takes shape in the early stages of his presidency, the universal takeaway was that regardless of the outcome his efforts will have a ripple effect for years to come on the global cocaine trade, which shows no signs of slowing down.

"I don't think these people are ever going to leave a lucrative business like the production and distribution of cocaine," said Mike Vigil, a decorated former DEA agent who was stationed in Colombia during the Pablo Escobar era. "In a way, negotiating is a stalling tactic where they buy time. They're able to generate more money and become more powerful."

Colombia is [pumping out more cocaine than ever before](#), with a record 204,000 hectares of coca under cultivation in 2021, according to [the latest United Nations estimate](#), a stunning increase of 43 percent from the previous year. Meanwhile, [overdoses involving cocaine have soared to unprecedented levels](#) in the U.S., although in large part due to fentanyl and synthetic opioids.

The U.S. has poured [billions of tax dollars into Colombia](#) since the early 2000s in the form of security aid and counter-narcotics efforts, bankrolling the drug war while also helping to modernize the national police force and military, improving the overall security situation even as coca has proliferated in remote areas beyond government control.

Petro is already cleaning house among the top ranks of the national security forces. One former DEA official, who requested anonymity because they still work in the region, worried Colombia would "go down the route of Venezuela or Bolivia" and end anti-narcotics cooperation.

"Most of the police officials I knew were fired, they got rid of all those generals," the ex-DEA official said. "He's trying to get rid of people who would give pushback or institutional knowledge of getting things done. Basically, he's cut out the entire leadership of the military and police."

The official warned the U.S. could "start tearing up trade agreements" if Petro does not keep some semblance of status quo. While that may sound extreme, the Trump administration was in fact close to [decertifying Colombia as a partner in the drug war](#), a move that would have roiled geopolitics across the region and limited the flow of aid dollars.

Kevin Whitaker, who was the U.S. ambassador to Colombia from 2014 to 2019, told VICE News he had to push Trump officials not to move forward with decertification because the pre-Petro government was uncooperative about eradicating coca crops. The Biden administration has [mostly been publicly supportive](#) of Petro's plans, but the U.S. ultimately does have significant leverage in the relationship.

Whitaker, who now leads a consulting firm, said he too had heard of "gutting" leadership changes in the top ranks of Colombian security forces, with DEA and other U.S. law enforcement agents "responding in a commendably loyal way to what they see as the throwing aside of the people they've been through the wars with."

While Whitaker was positive about Petro's efforts to achieve "Total Peace," he worried the country is not yet ready for such an ambitious goal. "Colombia is too big and the security forces are too limited," he said. "The cultural strength of illegality is too strong, the infrastructure is too weak to implement significant effort at national level. Trying to do everything everywhere all at once is a recipe for failure and another failure is not what Colombia needs."

The cynicism is widespread, in large part because previous efforts to make peace with groups like the FARC guerrillas [have been only partial successes](#), with some dissident factions holding out and others returning to the cocaine trade after failing to find alternate livelihoods.

Bonnie Klapper, an ex-federal prosecutor in New York who helped dismantle Colombia's Norte del Valle Cartel, told VICE News: "I don't know a single agent that thinks Petro is legit and won't go the way of Maduro or Castro," referring to the leaders of Venezuela and Cuba.

But Klapper, now a defense attorney defending accused drug traffickers, cautioned it's natural for drug warriors to bristle at change: "People who make a lot of money on the war on drugs are perfectly happy to have it continue," she said. "It's like the military industrial complex."

One of the groups key to achieving Total Peace is the Gulf Clan, a narco-paramilitary organization involved in cocaine production, human smuggling, illicit gold mining, and other criminal enterprises in several regions. The group's leader, known as Otoniel, was [captured](#) just before Petro took office and [extradited to New York City](#), where he's currently awaiting trial.

There has been skepticism that Otoniel's successors at the top of the Gulf Clan will be willing to cut a deal with the government, but Klapper said she currently represents one member of the group in a U.S. case and thinks those lower down the food chain, who are often trapped in a cycle of poverty and violence, are eager to find a way out.

"There's always going to be guys at top making a ton of money but the lower echelon, the support staff, they want a different life, and if Petro can offer that, maybe it'll diminish the ability of groups like the Gulf Clan to recruit," Klapper said. The hardest part, she added, might be handling factions that refuse to participate in the process. "Then you have to decide: What do I do? Send in the troops? Extradite? Do I fight them? Or do you take baby steps?"

While Petro officials have made it clear they do not intend to [fully legalize cocaine](#), the president broadly [supports drug decriminalization](#) and has spoken often about supporting the needs of coca growers, who are often mired in poverty in remote areas controlled by armed groups.

Half of all coca crops are concentrated in just 12 of Colombia's 1,122 municipalities, according to the UN, with hotspots near environmentally sensitive jungles, Indigenous reserves, national parks, and other protected areas. The UN report also found that growers in recent years have switched to more productive varieties of coca, optimizing yields and maximizing cocaine output to meet growing global demand, especially in Europe.

Some believe the UN report on record cocaine production in Colombia actually under-estimates the scale of the problem. Andrew Cunningham of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction noted that in [2019 global cocaine production](#) was estimated to be just over 1,700 metric tons, but law enforcement seized over 1,400 tons that year, leaving a mere 300 tons available to all of the world's consumers—math that simply does not add up.

"You get a situation where law enforcement seizures are more than is estimated to be produced globally, and that clearly can't be true," Cunningham said. "We've been saying for a while we've got problems with the figures."

The international fixation on coca production and eradication is counter-productive for those who have long called for more holistic solutions to the underlying problems that drive Colombia's poorest citizens into planting illicit crops. The legal alternatives are simply not viable in some places, either due to the presence of groups like Gulf Clan, or because the infrastructure does not exist to transport coffee, cacao, and other alternatives to market.

For years, the U.S. supported "aerial fumigation" or spraying of herbicide to wipe out swathes of coca in remote areas. But amid growing [concern that the herbicide causes illness](#), Colombia has backed away from spraying and switched to "manual eradication" or sending in teams of soldiers to rip out coca bushes by hand. While Petro initially said all eradication would end, he has since pivoted to anti-narcotics forces concentrating on [taking out large plantations](#).

The fundamental problem, according to Adam Isaacson, director of the defense oversight program at the Washington Office on Latin America, an NGO that advocates for human rights in the region, is that the Colombian government is still absent from huge chunks of the countryside. Rather than doing the hard work of developing infrastructure, the band-aid solution is to chop down as much coca as possible.

“The people who are critics of Petro and want to start spraying again do not have an interest in solving this problem,” Isaacson said. “Maybe they think Colombia will never govern its territory so let’s just spray and mow the lawn and keep it manageable. It’s a short-term numbers game.”

Historians also see lessons in the mistakes of past negotiations with paramilitaries and guerrillas in Colombia from the 1980s to the 2000s. Andrei Gomez-Suarez, a Colombian expert on reconciliation and peace at the U.K.’s University of Winchester, said that in each instance previously, “The drug trade continues and just changes hands.”

“You really need a holistic approach to engage all the actors that benefit from the drug industry,” Gomez-Suarez said. “But Petro is not naive and understands the only way that’s going to happen is if he finds a way to collaborate with the U.S.”

The stakes, he emphasized, are high: “If this fails you’ll see higher levels of violence, you’ll see more cocaine production, you’ll see the destruction of the Amazon jungle.”

Petro has only been in office since August, and the Total Peace effort remains in the early stages, with government officials laying the groundwork for next steps. But Colombian presidents are limited to just one four-year term, so Petro faces urgency to move quickly. For some, just planting the idea that peace is possible is significant.

Sanho Tree, an expert on drug policy and coca production in Colombia at the Institute for Policy Studies, a think tank in Washington, D.C., compared the magnitude of the challenge facing Petro to efforts to end opium poppy cultivation in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Tree noted that the amount of ungoverned territory Colombia is bigger than Texas and California combined, and without the ability to police that land, coca will continue to proliferate.

“You can’t talk about regulating if you don’t have regulators,” Tree said. “You can’t have regulation without rule of law. If your regulators come back headless, the regulations are moot.”

For his part, Petro seems to grasp that simply declaring an end to the drug war does not make it so. He’s also savvy enough to realize the cocaine trade will not simply evaporate without deep systemic changes on the global level. In his speech at the UN, he drew a connection between drug addiction and “the true addiction of this phase of human history: the addiction to irrational power, profit and money.”

“There will be no peace without social, economic and environmental justice,” Petro said. “We are at war with the planet too. Without peace with the planet, there will be no peace among nations.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 Brooklyn charges 32 for gang shootings
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/15/nyregion/brooklyn-gang-violence-charges.html
GIST	<p>Prosecutors in Brooklyn on Tuesday charged 32 people who they said were associated with two rival gangs in the borough’s Brownsville neighborhood. The two groups had been locked in a cycle of retaliatory shootings over several years that had left two gang members dead and 14 people injured.</p> <p>The indictments were announced during a briefing at the office of the Brooklyn district attorney, Eric Gonzalez, who appeared alongside Keechant L. Sewell, the commissioner of the New York Police Department; James Essig, the department’s chief of detectives; and Jason Savino, the head of the department’s Gun Violence Suppression Division.</p> <p>The investigation, called Operation Close Quarters, took over two-and-a-half years and covered a total of 27 incidents, Mr. Gonzalez said. In total, the prosecutor’s office unsealed four indictments, with 106 total charges, including conspiracy to commit murder, homicide, weapons possession and reckless endangerment.</p>

The violence between the two gangs — the WOOO and the CHOO — which operated in neighboring public housing developments, began in the summer of 2020 with the killing of a WOOO member, Jahrell Gause, prosecutors said. But the retaliatory violence between the two gangs was fully unleashed five days later after Shamel Boomer, a man associated with the WOOO, was killed and the CHOO celebrated his death on social media, according to prosecutors.

The CHOO's posts about Mr. Boomer, which were interpreted as insults, led to an exchange of threats between the rival gangs on social media that eventually erupted onto the streets of Brownsville, Mr. Gonzalez said. Shootings occurred as children were walking with their parents nearby. A 3-year-old girl was shot in the shoulder while leaving a day care center with her father. And one shooting between rival members took place outside of a medical office. Another WOOO member, Tyrie McLaughlin, was killed in 2022.

"There's no thinking about the terrible consequences that this behavior is causing in their community," Mr. Gonzalez said, referring to the groups. "They're simply going to shoot on sight at rival gang members."

Several of those charged had a history of violence and had been arrested in connection to past shootings, Mr. Savino said.

"These are that small group of individuals that make it downright dangerous for all the great people in our communities," he said.

The announcement on Tuesday follows the indictments of several sprawling criminal gang organizations in the city over the past year. In each case, prosecutors said that the dozens of people charged had terrorized their neighborhoods with violence.

Over the summer, Alvin L. Bragg, the Manhattan district attorney, announced [state and federal indictments against 24 people](#) connected to a subgroup of a criminal gang known as the Trinitarios. The subgroup, known as Own Every Dollar, was accused of committing murders, shootings, robberies and other crimes mainly around their Washington Heights neighborhood in Manhattan.

And in January, the Brooklyn prosecutor's office charged 17 members of [three street gangs in the borough that had formed an alliance](#) and that had unleashed a wave of violence, leaving four people dead and 10 others wounded, according to prosecutors. The men and women indicted ranged in age from 17 to 23 and faced charges of second-degree murder, assault and criminal possession.

At a news conference at the time announcing the indictments, Mayor Eric Adams said that takedowns of large criminal gang networks should be duplicated across the city.

"We're not going to live in a culture of violence and we won't be defined by the crisis of violence," he said.

If convicted, some of those charged on Tuesday face life sentences, while many face a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison, Mr. Gonzalez said.

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HEADLINE	11/15 King Co. arrests 9: attempts sex w/minors
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/undercover-king-county-detectives-arrest-nine-suspects-planning-to-pay-for-sex-with-minors
GIST	KING COUNTY, Wash. - King County deputies arrested nine people suspected of inappropriately communicating with minors as young as 14 years old, planning to pay money to have sex with them. Undercover detectives conducted the arrests during a sting operation at a hotel in SeaTac .

"These are the most vulnerable people in our community, our adolescent and youth. And there are those who want to go out there and prey on them, they want to try to exploit them sexually. Our job is to interrupt that and make sure that the Puget Sound area, and King County specifically, is not a place where that's going to occur," said Cpt. Tim Meyer with the sheriff's office.

Monday was the first appearance in court for all nine suspects. King County prosecutors argued for their bail to be between \$75,000 and \$100,000. A judge found probable cause in each case and set bail between \$5,000 and \$15,000.

Each suspect faces charges of Communication with a Minor for Immoral Purposes and Commercial Sex Abuse of a Minor.

Court documents showed the suspects live in different parts of western Washington, with one from as far away as Iowa. The documents state the suspects used online messaging tools like MeetMe, Grindr and Craigslist to communicate with who they thought were young teenage girls, "played" by undercover detectives.

In one case, the documents said a man "eventually agreed to meet the 14-year-old child at her hotel room and agreed to bring alcohol, marijuana and \$5 for vaginal sex." The documents also said after his arrest, the man admitted to investigators that he "just recently applied for a job as a middle school tennis coach."

"We recognize that, although we had some great success with the phenomenal work by our members last weekend, we understand that market doesn't go away. There are always going to be those that exploit the most vulnerable," said Meyer. "We need to interrupt that."

Without revealing too much of the investigation, Meyer said detectives with the Criminal Investigation Division have been following online trends and patterns. This ultimately led them to set up the sting operation in SeaTac. The CID conducts these targeted operations several times per year throughout King County.

"We're going to use information intelligence to drive our decisions, where to put the enforcement action. And in this case, [SeaTac] just happened to be the area of King County where they felt an emphasis was appropriate," said Meyer.

Nowadays, there is easy access to so many messaging tools, including some lesser-known websites and apps like Discord, Skout and Whisper. The sheriff's office urges parents and guardians to be vigilant of their child's online activity, and transparent about the risks involved.

"We've moved far beyond just traditional Facebook. From digital apps, phone apps—whatever it is—messaging apps, be sure that you're out there, you're engaged, know what your kids are doing, know what's on their phones," said Meyer. "Be vigilant. Understand what your kids are doing online. There are so many different apps. Be transparent, have open frequent conversation about online security."

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HEADLINE	11/15 Mexican cartel drug runners sentenced
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/federal-drug-trafficking-convictions-mexican-cartel-runners-violent-debt-collectors-methamphetamine-heroin-fentanyl-gun-crime-king-snohomish-lewis-pierce-county-western-district-washington-justice-department-seattle-washington-us-attorney#
GIST	<p>Two men who served as drug runners for a Mexican drug cartel were sentenced Nov. 8 to federal prison on federal drug trafficking convictions, the US Attorney's office for the Western District of Washington reported.</p> <p>Armando Fierro-Ponce, 28, was sentenced to 8 years in prison by U.S. District Judge John C. Coughenour.</p>

In the sentencing record, Coughenour noted that Fierro-Ponce acted as a debt collector for the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, obtaining guns using threats of violence against those who owed the cartel money.

Edgar Luna-Garcia, 27, was sentenced to 5 years in prison. Federal prosecutors described as someone trusted by the organization with large loads of methamphetamine and was called on to clean out a stash house after a shooting.

“A wiretap investigation captured the criminal conduct of these two and the roles they played in the organization,” said U.S. Attorney Nick Brown. “Fierro-Ponce discussed obtaining firearms and threatening those in debt to the organization.”

Information obtained via wiretap allowed investigators to interrupt plans the cartel had to kidnap and assault others, officials said.

The cartel was known for trafficking in pound quantities of methamphetamine, heroin, and potentially deadly fentanyl tablets throughout King, Snohomish, Lewis, and Pierce counties.

Fierro-Ponce was among 19 people indicted in July 2020 following an 18-month investigation. The group disguised methamphetamine in candles to smuggle it into the Pacific Northwest, officials said.

When the candle wax was melted, the methamphetamine was processed into crystal meth and then sold, officials said.

For two months while investigators were monitoring phones, multiple times were documented when Fierro-Ponce was heard discussing firearms and violent debt-collection activities, officials said.

This evidence allowed investigators to flood the area near a potential victim with police, warn the potential victim, and make arrests to prevent the violence, officials said.

U.S. Attorneys Amy Jaquette and C. Andrew Colasurdo led the prosecution.

Neither Fierro-Ponce nor Luna-Garcia have legal status in the U.S. and likely will be deported following their prison terms.

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HEADLINE	11/15 Another string of robberies strike King Co.
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/police-continue-investigate-another-string-robberies-hits-king-county/NUCQKCDDZVGZNIDCZSK2JG3KZA/
GIST	<p>RENTON, Wash. — The crime spree continues in King County, as more businesses have become victims of armed robberies.</p> <p>Last week, seven convenience stores were robbed at gunpoint in Seattle, Skyway and Burien. Now, police believe the criminals are back at it.</p> <p>On Monday, a gas station and two hotels in King County were robbed in just a 40-minute span. The crimes happened at a La Quinta Inn & Suites in SeaTac, a Chevron gas station in SeaTac, and a Hilton Garden Inn in Renton.</p> <p>“This is not the King County I was born and raised in,” says Capt. Tim Meyer with the King County Sheriff’s Office.</p> <p>At first, convenience stores were the targets. Last Wednesday and Thursday, a series of store clerks were threatened with guns in exchange for cash.</p>

	<p>But Monday, hotels became the target. The sheriff's office believes at least five of the robberies are connected.</p> <p>"To see them expand that footprint and start to go into other businesses, that causes us pause," says Meyer following the hotel robberies. He added that the criminals' expansion "only adds urgency to get these folks identified."</p> <p>In surveillance video, one suspect can be heard yelling, "Give me all your money or I'll blow your head off!"</p> <p>Some of the robberies have happened in the early evening with customers nearby. The brazenness is a concern, says Meyer.</p> <p>"That tells me ... that these are folks that aren't considering the risks. They're willing to do this during peak commute time, peak number of witnesses," says Meyer.</p> <p>Hotel staff in Renton say two young adults came into the lobby shortly after 5 p.m., waving guns and demanding money. They were able to flee with nearly \$300 in cash and a woman's purse. Hotel guests were also in the lobby at the time of the robbery, some saying they feared for their lives.</p> <p>None of the robbery suspects from these 10 incidents have been taken into custody, but the King County Sheriff's Office is optimistic that there will be an end to this crime spree soon.</p> <p>"You may think you got away with something, but I wouldn't count on that," says Meyer.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Lynnwood 2yr-old fentanyl exposure death?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/2-year-old-lynnwood-likely-died-fentanyl-exposure/281-24f8ec82-3395-4770-8e1d-73e5958a984e
GIST	<p>LYNNWOOD, Wash — Detectives investigating the death of a child in Lynnwood Saturday suspect the 2-year-old died from fentanyl exposure.</p> <p>Snohomish County Sheriff's Office deputies responded to a residence around 4 a.m. Saturday for a report of an unresponsive 2-year-old. The child was taken to Swedish Hospital in Edmonds where he was pronounced dead, according to authorities.</p> <p>Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Unit (SIU) detectives learned the boy was in the care of his 40-year-old mother on Friday evening and Saturday morning. Detectives said the child became unresponsive shortly after he arrived at the apartment with his mother.</p> <p>Investigators found what they believe to be fentanyl, heroin and drug paraphernalia at the residence in a search. Less than a week after the child died, officials said they believe the 2-year-old's death was likely due to fentanyl exposure.</p> <p>The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office will provide the cause and manner of the child's death. The mother's vehicle was impounded as evidence in the investigation.</p> <p>Officials said this remains an active investigation. There was no information available Tuesday morning on possible charges for the child's mother.</p> <p>"It's intuitive that the more fentanyl that's out there, the more often kids will be getting into it," said Dr. Chris Buresh, an associate pProfessor at the University of Washington working in Emergency Medicine at Seattle Children's hospital and Harborview Medical Center.</p>

	<p>This is the second suspected fentanyl exposure of a toddler in Western Washington in the last three months. In August, a 2-year-old boy ate a fentanyl pill he found at Oakland Madrona Park in Tacoma, that child recovered from the exposure.</p> <p>“I’ve seen more adolescents coming in having unintentionally overdosed. As far as I can remember, I’ve only seen one child that had an unintentional exposure and overdosed,” said Buresh.</p> <p>Dr. Buresh said a regular dose of Narcan is OK to use on a child.</p> <p>“You can’t really give too much of it and even for a small child, it should be fine,” Buresh said.</p> <p>It’s important that if a parent does administer Narcan to a child, they still need to call 911 because it will wear off. Because Fentanyl isn’t regulated, it’s impossible to know how much has been ingested, so it’s important to get straight to a hospital.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 Spokane Co. deputies fatally shoot man
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/spokane-county-deputies-fatally-shoot-man-after-standoff/
GIST	<p>SPOKANE — Spokane County Sheriff’s Office deputies have shot and killed a man after a 12-hour standoff at a home in the Greenacres area.</p> <p>According to the Spokane County Sheriff’s Office, the man was fatally shot after he started a fire at the home Tuesday and then walked outside, KREM reported.</p> <p>During the standoff, deputies tried to get the man to cooperate and at one point used tear gas in an effort to get him to leave the dwelling, the Sheriff’s Office said.</p> <p>During the standoff, the man fired a gun through open windows in his home and shot down two police drones, the Sheriff’s Office said.</p> <p>This incident started Monday night when the man’s neighbors reported hearing gunshots, and, after checking their residence, they found what appeared to be bullet holes.</p> <p>Deputies arrived and attempted to contact the suspect.</p> <p>Several agencies responded during the incident, including a SWAT team, crisis negotiators, mental health co-responder units, Spokane Regional Air Support Unit members, Spokane Valley Fire Department, and American Medical Response.</p> <p>The man’s name and the name or names of deputies who shot and killed the man haven’t been released.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/15 No arrests stabbing deaths Idaho students
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Police-Suspect-sought-in-University-of-Idaho-17586268.php
GIST	<p>MOSCOW, Idaho (AP) — The killer — or killers — who stabbed four University of Idaho students to death remained at large Tuesday, prompting many students to leave the campus in the idyllic small town despite police assurances that there was no imminent risk to the community.</p> <p>So many students had left the scenic tree-lined campus in Moscow, Idaho, by Tuesday that university officials said a candlelight vigil scheduled for the next day would instead be held after the Thanksgiving break.</p> <p>The students, all close friends, were found dead in an off-campus rental home around noon on Sunday, and officials said they likely were killed several hours earlier. Latah County Coroner Cathy Mabbutt told the</p>

Spokane, Washington-based television station KXLY that her preliminary investigation showed the students were stabbed to death. There is no indication that substance use was involved in the deaths, Mabbutt said.

The Moscow Police Department has not said whether investigators have identified any suspects, but maintained in a statement that the killings came in “an isolated, targeted attack and there is no imminent threat to the community at large.” Police also said evidence from the scene indicates there is no broader risk, but provided no information about that evidence nor why they believe the victims were targeted.

Latah County Prosecutor Bill Thompson said he understands that the police claims that the public isn't at imminent risk seems contradictory to the facts that have been released so far about the killings.

“Obviously, there's no way police can say that there's no risk, but what they're seeing indicates that there's not a risk that this person will randomly attack people,” Thompson said, noting that it's also not yet clear if it was one attacker or more.

“I don't think they're going to foreclose the possibility that it could be one or more people, but right now they don't know who is responsible,” Thompson said.

The police department said investigators were working to establish a timeline of the victims' activities before they were killed. That includes reviewing video from a Twitch livestream that showed two of the victims chatting and getting a late night snack from a food truck in the hours before the slayings, said Thompson.

“They're in the process of identifying the other people who were there,” at the food truck, Thompson said, “and what sort of contact did they have.”

Autopsies scheduled for Wednesday could provide more information about the slayings.

Investigators were “following all leads and identifying persons of interest” in the case, the police statement said.

Police responding to a report of an unconscious person at the home Sunday discovered the students' bodies. The victims were identified as Ethan Chapin, a 20-year-old from Conway, Washington; Madison Mogen, a 21-year-old from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Xana Kernodle, 20, from Avondale, Arizona; and Kaylee Goncalves, 21, from Rathdrum, Idaho. Authorities have not described which of the victims lived in the home.

Kernodle's sister, Jazzmin Kernodle, wrote in a text to the AP that her family was confused and anxiously waiting for updates from the investigation.

“Xana was so happy and loved, and it breaks my heart,” Jazzmin Kernodle wrote. The other students were also amazing people, she said, and her sister was lucky to have them in her life.

“She was so lighthearted, and always lifted up a room. She made me such a proud big sister, and I wish I could have had more time with her,” she wrote. “She had so much life left to live.”

Photos on Instagram show the four as close-knit, longstanding friends. All were members of sororities or fraternities. Kernodle and Chapin were dating.

In one post, Kernodle wished Chapin a happy birthday, writing, “life is so much better with you in it, love you!” The caption was accompanied by a photo of Chapin in a chef's hat with Kernodle on his shoulders and wearing mouse ears.

Several weeks ago, Goncalves posted a series of photos showing her and Mogan growing up together. “I wouldn't have wanted anyone else to be the main character in all my childhood stories,” she wrote.

"I love you more than life! My best friend forever and more," Mogen replied.

Another photo, apparently posted hours before they died, showed the four smiling and posing, seemingly carefree, along with two other friends. Chapin had his arm draped over Kernodle's shoulders, and Mogen was perched on Goncalves' shoulders.

"One lucky girl to be surrounded by these people every day," Goncalves wrote.

Signs of the community's grief and uncertainty were scattered throughout the small farming town on Tuesday. Moscow has about 26,000 residents but that population swells by about 11,000 when the students arrive.

A makeshift memorial with flowers, candles and notes was set up on a table in front of the Mad Greek restaurant in downtown Moscow where Kernodle and Mogen had worked. Four white pillar candles, each inscribed with the name of a slain student, burned in the center of the table.

The restaurant's owner wrote on Facebook that Mad Greek would close for a few days so staffers, friends and family could grieve "this incredible loss."

"Xana and Maddie have been servers here for several years and brought so much joy to our restaurant and all of those they encountered," the owner, Jackie Fischer, wrote. "You will be greatly missed. Thank you for being a part of our family/team, and for helping me so much over the years."

A flag flew at half-staff before the Sigma Chi fraternity, where Chapin was a member, just a short walk from the home where the four died.

The six-bedroom rental home remained surrounded by crime scene tape on Tuesday but had little sign of activity inside. A Latah County Sheriff's deputy stood guard near the driveway, and Idaho State Police officers were also at the scene.

Moscow police Captain Anthony Dahlinger said police were "trying to identify a suspect" but would not say if investigators had anyone in mind.

"These things are dynamic and constantly changing," Dahlinger said.

The University of Idaho canceled classes on Monday and said additional security staffers would be available to walk students across campus. Still, the lack of arrests and scarcity of information about the deaths prompted many to leave days before the Thanksgiving break was scheduled to begin.

The students who remained showed little sign of apprehension.

"I feel pretty safe," said student Nicole June on Tuesday. "I believe the police can do their job."

Nathan Lannigan, 18, said he was surprised with reports that there is no ongoing threat since a perpetrator has not been captured.

"That's a quick judgement, I think," Lannigan said.

In a Monday memo, University of Idaho President Scott Green urged university employees to be empathetic and flexible, and work with students who wanted to spend time with their families.

"Words cannot adequately describe the light these students brought to this world or ease the depth of suffering we feel at their passing under these tragic circumstances," Green wrote of the slain students.

	The university said Chapin was a freshman, and Kernodle was a junior majoring in marketing and a member of the Pi Beta Phi sorority. Mogen was a senior also majoring in marketing who belonged to Pi Beta Phi, and Goncalves was a senior majoring in general studies and a member of the Alpha Phi sorority, the university said.
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HEADLINE	11/15 UVA student recalls shooting on bus
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/uva-student-ryan-lynch-recalls-terrifying-moment-alleged-shooter-christopher-darnell-jones-opened-fire-on-bus?ref=home
GIST	<p>When University of Virginia pre-med student Ryan Lynch went to see <i>The Ballad of Emmett Till</i> on Sunday with two dozen other students from her African-American Theater class, she noticed one of them sitting by himself during the play.</p> <p>Lynch, a 19-year-old sophomore who transferred to UVA from Hampton University this year, met student-athlete Christopher Jones earlier in the semester at a tryout for a campus fashion show. But both of them got busy, and neither participated. The two reconnected on Sunday's outing to Washington D.C., about 2.5 hours from the UVA campus in Charlottesville.</p> <p>Following the show, Lynch made sure to check on Jones, who wasn't part of the class but was in another of the professor's courses and had been invited along.</p> <p>"I thought it might have been a little deep for him, so I went out of my way to speak to him on the bus afterwards," Lynch told The Daily Beast on Tuesday.</p> <p>Some 30 minutes later, as the bus arrived back at the UVA campus, Jones pulled out a gun and killed three student-athletes, according to police. Lynch was sitting up front with a friend, near the professor who had organized the outing.</p> <p>"We were just talking, and all of sudden we heard loud popping noises," Lynch said. "We thought it was like, chips, or balloons, we didn't know what it was. I had never even heard gunshots before, I was so confused... And then, all of a sudden, this huge cloud of smoke filled the bus."</p> <p>Lynch at first assumed that "someone had come on the bus and started shooting," she recalled. "But then I knew it couldn't be, because we hadn't stopped."</p> <p>After hearing the fourth shot, Lynch and her friend dropped down to the floor. The gunfire, which had erupted toward the back of the bus, "came closer and closer," according to Lynch, who had covered herself with her jacket and a blanket in an attempt to hide from the danger.</p> <p>Lynch and her friend, who did not want to be named publicly, "both thought he had shot everyone on the bus, because there were so many shots," she said.</p> <p>The noise was deafening and there was a lot of screaming, which Lynch said she didn't really hear because her brain "tuned that out."</p> <p>"We were scared to get off because there were shots coming up the aisle of the bus," she said. "[Then] Chris came up so slow, we thought he was going to shoot us, too. Then he got off the bus, [and] he shot the gun outside the bus."</p> <p>Before Jones fled, Lynch recalled her friend hearing him say, "F y'all."</p> <p>All three slain victims—Lavel Davis Jr., D'Sean Perry, and Devin Chandler—were active UVA football players. Jones reportedly made the UVA football team as a walk-on running back in 2018, but did not play in any games. Police have not yet determined a motive for the killings.</p>

Davis, Perry, and Chandler were also in the same African-American Theater class as Lynch, who became emotional as she described trying in vain with her friend to save Davis' life as he lay bleeding in the aisle of the bus on Sunday.

"We stood up and we were like, 'What just happened?'" Lynch said. "[Davis] was lying face-flat on the floor, he was bleeding so much. He had been shot multiple times. We were trying to figure out if we should get off the bus, but we stayed to help him. We had both done CPR training, he had a really faint pulse."

Perry and Chandler were in the rear of the bus—out of reach for Lynch, who had been taught not to move gunshot victims. So, with Davis' pulse fading, they ran to get help. After calling 911, the pair ran into the UVA theater building and hid in a bathroom.

An active shooter alert was issued by the school; Jones would elude police for another 12 hours. He was apprehended in Henrico County, about 77 miles away from UVA, on Monday shortly before 11 a.m., [according to local police](#).

"It was so scary—we didn't know if Chris was coming back to shoot us," Lynch said. "We had to be quiet because we didn't know if Chris was still around. No one knew his plan or what his intentions were."

In the surreal aftermath, once they were safe, Lynch said, "We all just sat with each other, crying, hearing each other's stories and what we saw."

Jones' mother, Margo Ellis, said she was "not speaking to reporters right now" when contacted by The Daily Beast on Monday. Tracie Baines, whose daughter went to high school with Jones and said they both knew him well, told The Daily Beast that the shooting seemed "so out of character, so very, very out of character" for the suspect. But in an [interview with Richmond NBC affiliate WWBT](#), Jones' father, Christopher Sr., said his son had seemed "paranoid" the last time they spoke.

The three victims of Sunday's shooting "did nothing" to deserve this, said Lynch.

"Those boys did nothing to him," she told The Daily Beast. "They were the sweetest guys. They were compassionate, always telling jokes, would always ask us if we needed anything. They were so sweet. They lit up the room. They always made me want to come to African-American Theater class. We were a really close group. We were very vulnerable in that class. We talked about our lives and things that had happened to us. It just had the best energy."

Lynch said she was told by one of her UVA mentors that "Vel didn't actually make it to the hospital."

"I just hope he heard us trying to help him and make sure he was okay," she said, through tears, adding, "It's just so heartbreaking to know that Chris was on the bus with us that day."

Jones, who reportedly had a difficult childhood, was nevertheless a standout student in high school. His father left the family when Jones was five, and Jones moved in with his grandmother in 2016 amid interpersonal difficulties with his mom. In July 2018, [Jones received the Dr. Porcher L. Taylor, Jr. Scholastic Award](#) for academic achievement, and he was later granted a scholarship to UVA, Virginia's flagship public university.

A source who knows Jones but asked not to be named told The Daily Beast that he had "been bullied" at UVA, "and it was bad." Relatives of Jones' [told NBC 12 on Monday that he had been hazed](#) while at UVA. School officials confirmed an alleged hazing incident, [according to CBS reporter Olivia Rinaldi](#), but witnesses at the time reportedly would not cooperate.

In a separate interview, [Lynch told CBS Philadelphia that Jones got up and pushed Davis](#) before pulling out his gun, saying, "You guys are always messing with me."

Jones had previously appeared on the radar of UVA officials, when he was involved in a “potential hazing issue,” the university said in a statement to the Associated Press. Over the course of an internal investigation, it emerged that Jones had been convicted of a misdemeanor concealed weapons violation in February 2021, but that he hadn’t reported the incident to UVA administrators, as school rules require.

Administrative charges through the university’s judiciary council are pending, UVA Police Chief Timothy J. Longo said at a press conference on Monday.

The school has made counseling and support services available for all students, faculty, and staff, [according to UVA President Jim Ryan](#).

For Lynch, who now must somehow focus enough to return to her studies, watching her friends die has been a struggle to comprehend.

As she told The Daily Beast on Tuesday, “I have no words.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 Palestinian kills 3 Israelis, wounds 3
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/palestinian-stabs-israelis-west-bank-settlement-93317119
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM -- A knife-wielding Palestinian killed two Israelis in a stabbing Tuesday at a settlement in the occupied West Bank, then stole a car as he tried to flee the scene and crashed it on a nearby highway, killing a third Israeli, officials said.</p> <p>The attack at the settlement of Ariel also left three Israelis wounded. The Palestinian was shot and killed by an Israeli soldier as he tried to run away from the crash scene.</p> <p>The Zaka paramedic service said the three wounded were being treated in hospital and that they were in serious condition.</p> <p>It was the latest assault in a wave of Israeli-Palestinian violence this year that has seen Palestinian attackers target Israeli civilians and near nightly Israeli arrest raids that have fueled unrest in the occupied territory.</p> <p>The Israeli military said the Palestinian first stabbed several Israelis at the entrance to the settlement’s industrial zone, then proceeded to a nearby gas station and stabbed more people there. The army said the man then stole a car and intentionally crashed it into another vehicle before fleeing the scene on foot.</p> <p>Troops were searching the area for additional suspects, the military said. Israeli media identified the three victims as 59-year-old Mordechai Ashkenazi, 50-year-old Tamir Avichay and 36-year-old Michael Ladigin.</p> <p>Amateur video aired on Israeli television appeared to show the suspected attacker running down a highway and collapsing to the ground after he was shot. The Palestinian Health Ministry later confirmed that Mohammad Souf, 18, from the nearby village of Hares was the slain attacker.</p> <p>The assailant's uncle, Marwan Souf, told the official Palestinian news agency, Wafa, that Israeli security forces raided the family house in Hares and interrogated 15 of his relatives. He also said forces took measurements of the home in preparation for demolition. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to request for comment.</p> <p>Israeli army spokesman Ran Kochav told Kan Radio that Souf held a permit to work in the settlement. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but Gaza's rulers, the militant Hamas group, hailed it as “heroic.”</p>

Hundreds of Hamas supporters staged a rally in the blockaded Gaza Strip on Tuesday in celebration of the attack. They chanted slogans oraising Souf and held posters with his photo. In several spots across the blockaded Gaza Strip, Palestinians passed out sweets when they heard the news.

Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid sent condolences to the families of those killed in the attack and said Israel was “fighting terror nonstop and full force.”

“Our security forces are working around the clock to protect Israeli citizens and harm terror infrastructure everywhere, all the time,” he said.

The United States, European Union and United Nations envoys all sharply condemned the attack. "This senseless violence needs to stop!" U.S. Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides wrote on Twitter.

This year’s surge in Israeli-Palestinian violence in the West Bank and east Jerusalem has killed at least 25 people on the Israeli side and more than 130 Palestinians, making 2022 the deadliest since 2006.

Israel says its almost nightly arrest raids in the West Bank — which began after Palestinian attacks killed 19 Israelis last spring — are needed to dismantle militant networks at a time when Palestinian security forces are unable or unwilling to do so.

The Palestinians say the raids undermine their security forces and are aimed at cementing Israel’s open-ended 55-year occupation of lands they want for their hoped-for state. Hundreds of Palestinians have been rounded up in such raids, with many placed in so-called administrative detention, which allows Israel to hold them without trial or charge.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians seek those territories for their hoped-for independent state.

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